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HOW I GOT OVER: A STUDY OF THE TENURE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK FEMALE  
PROFESSORS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Education and Human Sciences

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Irving and Ann Parker, for always encouraging me and supporting me. Throughout my life, you both have made sacrifices so that I could pursue my dreams. You made sure that I always had the best education and encouraged me to do my best even when I may have doubted my own abilities. To my mom, for always being my prayer warrior and praying for me when I didn't have the strength to pray for myself. For always motivating me when I was ready to throw in the towel. Most importantly for never allowing me to be mediocre (*Where There's A Will There's An A* paid off!). For being stern and having requirements that forced me to step up to the plate and shaped me into the woman I am today. To my daddy for being my rock and allowing me to melt down but always being there to listen throughout my trials and tribulations in life. For making huge financial sacrifices to make sure I had the best education available to me. For always being there when I needed you whether it was to pick me up from school when I was sick, coming to change a tire or being there when I went to dances or picking me up from games, I appreciate everything. However, you still are and always will be smarter than me! I was truly blessed by God when he gave me you two!

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Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Isaiah 54:17

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the tenure experiences of seven Black female professors as they pursued tenure at select public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions. This study was pursued in an attempt to determine what challenges were presented during the tenure process. More importantly, this study sought to determine the role of mentorship in the pursuit of tenure. In addition, recommendations for success were offered to Black females who are currently pursuing tenure or who may choose to enter the academy. A narrative research study was utilized for this study which was informed by Black Feminist Thought. This allowed for a look into the experiences of Black female faculty at PWIs.

Interviews were conducted with seven tenured Black female professors in spring 2017 at public, higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions in the Midwestern and Southern states of the U.S. Interviews included 5 associate professors and 2 full professors. Participants talked about their experiences during open-ended semi-structured interviews. Evidence is presented on how the tenure and promotion process was viewed by each participant.

The three research questions addressed in the study are: (1) What are the experiences of Black female professors at select public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions as they pursued tenure? (2) What recommendations would they offer to other Black female professors at public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions pursuing a career in academia? (3) What role has mentorship played in their experiences in academia?

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The vast demographic divide between professors and students in higher education is of growing educational and public concern (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). An overwhelmingly White teaching force is working with a growing non-white student population (Berchini, 2015). African American women faculty are largely concentrated in HBCUs (Benjamin 1997). The exact number and percentage of African American faculty at PWIs vary depending on the source and year of data collection. According to Evans (2007), at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only 2 % of all tenured professors were Black females. According to the most recent data available from the National Center of Education Statistics (2015), the number has not increased significantly and is currently 2.7%. Cultural barriers that have eliminated opportunities for women have proven even more challenging for those who are Black (Evans, 2007). Most Black women face more obstacles than White women and thus the glass ceiling which enables white women to “see the top” is not visible to Black women (Cox Edmondson, 2012). African American women live in a society that devalues both their sex and their race (Myers, 2002). Black female faculty are placed at a unique disadvantage of having to navigate their race as well as their gender (Edwards, Beverly, & Alexander-Snow, 2007). There is a decrease of Black female faculty entering higher education and of those hired, they are not being retained, promoted, and tenured. Across disciplines, pattern of racial bias and under-representation continues to be displayed against Black female faculty (Jackson & Johnson, 2011; Turner, Myers, Jr. and Creswell, 1999). Christian (2012) urged that the stories and the challenges of Black female faculty in academia need to be told with urgency. In this study, I will address the need for more tenured and tenure-

track Black females at Predominantly White Institutions, specifically in Higher/highest research activity institutions.

Historically, when women were first hired in colleges based on quota, no one took offense; as civil rights progressed and quotas for were eliminated, new quotas were in place whereby a certain number of Black females had to be hired (Parker, 2015). One problem was essentially solved with the implementation of a new one. There is a conscious understanding, however, of actions taken for inclusion, rather than actions taken for the benefit of higher education. Once Black female faculty enter the academy of higher education, they are with various challenges not experienced by men-regardless of color. Duncan (2014) argued that women of color are viewed as commodities necessary to create a diverse faculty. When Black female faculty are hired, they are often left to navigate the system alone. Hampton and Cooper (2007) argued that Black female faculty are overworked while being invisible as well as isolated and marginalized and left with little time and very few resources for adequate research. Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada and Galindo (2009) noted that Black female faculty are often marginalized by being both a woman and being Black. These researchers found that Black female faculty reported more teaching, advising and committee work than their White male and female counterparts. Black female faculty are usually the only persons or women of color in their departments which results in them being solicited to be the on-campus spokesperson for minorities and the advisor for minority students. Additionally, many Black female faculty research and publish on issues related to race and ethnicity. Often, this work is not seen as valuable. Christian (2012) argued:

Black female faculty...in the role of token assumes yet another dimension because in the context of affirmative action, Black female faculty were “twoofers”...filling the needs or quotas for race and gender representation. Black female faculty often filled such roles without a clear understanding of how these roles were complicit with strategies of

concealment and structures of subordination and constituted a kind of academic servitude (p.28).

As a woman of color in a Ph.D. program at a highest/higher research PWI, I realized that there were very few Black female professors within the department even though there were a significant number of Black women in the program. As I reflected on my educational experience, I realized that I had never encountered a Black female professor since I graduated from my undergraduate institution which was a HBCU.

### **Personal Experience**

I grew up in South Louisiana in a very small village. I attended Catholic school from kindergarten until 5<sup>th</sup> grade. During those years, I was taught by all White female teachers and I learned in classrooms that were majority White. I would never discount the impact and effect that many of my teachers had on my life, especially my kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers. I was accustomed to being one of few but often the only. I convinced my parents to allow me to attend public school for sixth and seventh grade. Unlike my sisters and myself, my parents both graduated from high school during segregation. They had only been taught by Black men and women and were educated in exclusively Black classrooms which were the only options at that time. When I went to public school, for the first time in my life, I had Black teachers (male and female) and I experienced a diverse classroom. I had teachers who took special interest in me and encouraged my learning by involving me in various programs to further my education beyond the scope of the classroom. For once, I saw that it was possible for me to be an educator for I had visible proof in front of me. I had footsteps that I could now follow in and felt for the first time that my potential and value were recognized at school.

After seventh grade, I returned to Catholic high school where I was once again relegated to just being taught. I would not feel fully engaged again until I entered college. Since earning

my bachelor's degree, I have not personally encountered another classroom instructed by a Black female in the state of Louisiana, until the fall 2016 semester. My educational experiences cultivate my belief that Black female educators are important to the development of Black students in our colleges and universities. It is important as Black female faculty, especially in education, to be able to see that it is possible. If there are no Black female representatives, it may be difficult for Black female students to visualize the possibilities for themselves. I was raised in a two-parent home where education was stressed and going to college was not an option. Even with those expectations, the relationships that I experienced with Black female professors at my undergraduate institution helped to propel me to the finish line.

Through my experiences as an educator, I am convinced that these relationships are even more vital for students who do not have the support or encouragement from home or another support system. Even though I have not worked as an educator in a university setting, my experiences in K-12 education have allowed me to see the importance of making connections with students of color. I have had many students throughout my career who have expressed that the connections they have had with teachers and counselors of color have made a difference in their lives. Often their parents were not familiar with the processes and were new to the country. In addition, as the first Black female counselor at the high school where I worked, I learned the importance of having a support system of women who I could connect with. As I thought about Black female professors at PWIs, I wondered if they had the same experiences that my colleagues and I experienced in institutions that lacked diversity in the faculty and administration but had a student population that was majority minority.

### **Problem Statement**

Racial barriers stemming from years of segregation and minority action still exist in the academia framework (Ballenger, 2010); people with their own opinions, appropriate or not, will still operate in Black and White. Although academia is becoming more diverse, the academy still remains dominated by White males. As of 2015, the National Center of Education Statistics (most current data available), reported that there are 513,034 full-time faculty (assistant, associate and full professors) in degree granting postsecondary institutions in the United States. The report indicated that 218,955 are White males and only 14,133 are Black females. Academic bullying makes women who do climb the hierarchy fearful, for years of hard work may never result in tenure from an unsupportive school (Frazier, 2011). The barriers currently in place not only challenge Black females but also constrict necessary progress in post-secondary education. Additionally, it is the opposition against the Black female, who, not only has to deal with color boundaries, but gender boundaries as well (Moore, Alexander, & Lemelle, 2010). For those Black faculty who choose to teach at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), they are likely to be unwelcomed and to experience hostile environments within the classroom (Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, 2009). Many Black female faculty who enter the professoriate leave the profession for several reasons. Black female faculty have experienced exclusion, isolation, lack of validation and condescension amongst other forms of marginalization. Universities often fail to acknowledge and recognize the subtle acts of racism and micro-aggressions that are experienced by Black female faculty at PWIs (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, and Galindo, 2009). In addition, White male students, whether consciously or unconsciously, often use their positions of privilege to undermine the authority of Black female faculty (Pitman, 2010). These are all reasons that have attributed to Black female faculty leaving the professoriate. Patitu and Hinton (2003) shed light on the lack of success that PWIs have had

in recruiting and retaining Black female faculty which has attributed to the revolving door in higher education. Lopez and Johnson (2014) indicated that the academic landscape is littered with the shells of previously active and engaged Black females who have mentally and physically disengaged because of what might be characterized as battle fatigue. Research (National Center for Education Statistics) has indicated that there are very small numbers of Black female professors at predominantly white institutions in the United States.

It is important for Black females to be present in order to help with the retention and completion of Black students at PWIs. Presence of Black female faculty at an institution may encourage Black students to persist (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Myers (2002) noted the importance of retention and success of Black female faculty students, faculty, and staff to the number of Black female faculty on college campuses. Every year colleges are becoming more diverse. In order to advance scholarship that encompasses a range of experiences, theories, and frameworks, universities must recruit diverse students and faculty (Evans, 2007). Students need to have academic experiences that mirror the diversity that they encounter within their classrooms and society.

### **Purpose of Study**

Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada and Galindo (2009) reported that Black female faculty have found difficulty in bringing unique perspectives to the academy due to tokenism and isolation. Although each university has guidelines for obtaining tenure, requirements can vary by departments within a university with some having set rubrics and others being more subjective. Evans (2007) noted that decisions related to tenure are subjective and open to interpretation by each department, college, and administration and this subjectivity threatens Black females' personal and collective identities and prevents them from contributing to

institutional change. A tenure and promotion process grounded in merit and hard work across every university and within every department is needed for faculty to establish a clear process for tenure and promotion. The purpose of this case study is to explore the experiences of Black female tenured professors at select public higher/highest research activity institutions (HRI). The purpose of this study is twofold. First, I will explore the tenure experiences of Black female faculty at public HRI to gather information that may be helpful to other Black female faculty pursuing a career as a tenure-track professor. Second, I will explore the role of mentoring and support systems for Black female professors at public higher/highest research activity PWIs and to determine the effectiveness of mentorship on the retention of Black female professors

### **Research Questions**

In order to expand the literature on the experiences of Black female tenured professors, it is necessary to explore the experiences of Black female professors in academia. I will specifically look at Black female professors at select public higher/highest research activity institutions. First, I will explore the experiences of Black female professors through their career to gather information that may be helpful to other Black female professors pursuing a career as a tenure-track professor. Secondly, the role of mentoring and support systems will be explored to determine their effectiveness for Black female professors in the professoriate. I will use the following research questions to guide my study:

- (1) What are the experiences of Black female professors at select public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions as they pursued tenure?
- (2) What recommendations would they offer to other Black female professors at public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions pursuing a career in academia?



### (3) What role has mentorship played in their experiences in academia?

Through this study, I seek to determine whether Black female professors at public, predominantly white institutions are at a disadvantage during the tenure and promotion process and if so, what actions have been successful in obtaining tenure.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. Despite the difficult challenges that Black female professors have faced at predominantly white institutions, Black female professors are still teaching at the university level; however, the disproportionate rates at which women of color are hired into lower ranks is exploitative (Evans, 2007). Pittman (2010) reported that Black female faculty are relegated to employment at two-year institutions, community colleges, and minority serving institutions which further reflects gender and race inequality. In addition, when they are employed at four year institutions, they are concentrated in lower ranks as instructors, lecturers, and assistant professors which are less powerful and valued positions in the professoriate in the United States. Previous studies have been conducted to explore the experiences of Black female professors in academia; however, little research has been done to document the individual experiences of Black female professors at the associate and full professor level at predominantly white institutions. Stanley (2006) noted:

there seems to be a growing conspiracy of silence surrounding the experiences of faculty of color teaching at PWIs, experiences captured in the literature give reason for Black faculty members who have been through the process to reach out to others, particularly when faculty members lack effectual bonds and social capital with their departments, schools, etc. (p.701).

In contrast to Stanley's assertion, this study investigated how Black female professors have successfully navigated through different stages of the tenure and promotion process while coping with obstacles that they have encountered.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used to analyze the experiences of Black female professors at public higher/highest research activity institutions is Black Feminist Thought (BFT)- a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize human vision of community. The history of higher education is rooted in exclusion. Higher education was established for White males and for decades was set up to exclude anyone who was not. BFT draws attention to the fact that Black female professors (and other women of color) are not recognized as distinct groups and are discriminated against in different manners than men of color and White women (Collins, 1998).

**Black Feminist Thought.** BFT recognizes that Black women have a unique position in society arising from the intersection of race and gender. King (1995) elaborates,

A Black feminist ideology, first and foremost, thus declares the visibility of Black women. It acknowledges the fact that two innate and inerasable traits, being both Black and female, constitute our special status in American society. Second, Black feminism asserts self-determination as essential. Black women are empowered with the right to interpret our reality and define our objectives. While drawing on a rich tradition of struggle as Blacks and as women, we continually establish and reestablish our own priorities. (p.312)

Due to this unique positioning of race and gender, Black women have a particularly distinct struggle within social hierarchy which forms a unique base of knowledge and testimony.

Black Feminist Thought can be used to evaluate the intersectionality of race and gender in certain contexts. Collins (1990) argues:

Black female faculty with academic credentials who seek the authority that their status grants are faced with pressures to use their authority to help legitimate a system that devalues and excludes the majority of Black female faculty. Black female faculty recognize that the insider group-White men- require special privileges from the larger society. One way to exclude the majority of Black female faculty is to permit a few Black female faculty to acquire positions in institutions that legitimate knowledge and encourage Black female faculty to work within a system where they are taken for granted and made to feel inferior by the culture at large (p.204).

Black Female Professors have to learn how to navigate the terrain of the dominant group and assimilate to the culture if they plan to be successful at Predominantly White Institutions. Many colleges and universities are not willing to examine themselves through the lens of race. They would rather implement diversity campaigns that do not result in much change. Instead, many universities avoid discussion about change and hope is placed in the belief that attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors will self-adjust. Without fully examining the issues that permeate universities surrounding race and exclusion, little can be done to diversify campuses and create more inclusive environments.

### **Definitions and Related Concepts**

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study. The researcher developed all definitions not accompanied by a citation.

1. Tenure-track professors- Tenure-track faculty members are seeking tenure and hold the title “Assistant Professor.” (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
2. Tenured professor- Tenured faculty members hold indefinite tenure in one or more campus units and hold the title “Associate Professor” or “Professor”. A tenured professor has an appointment that lasts until retirement age, except for dismissal with just cause. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
3. Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)- were established to serve the educational needs of black Americans. Prior to the time of their establishment, and for many years afterwards, blacks were generally denied admission to traditionally white institutions. As a result, HBCUs became the principal means for providing postsecondary education to black Americans. (U.S. Department of Education)

4. Predominantly White institution (PWI) - is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment. However, the majority of these institutions may also be understood as historically White institutions in recognition of the binarism and exclusion supported by the United States prior to 1964. It is in a historical context of segregated education that predominantly White colleges and universities are defined and contrasted from other colleges and universities that serve students with different racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds (e.g., historically Black colleges and universities, HBCUs). U.S. higher education is rooted in the establishment of the predominantly White college but over time has changed and proliferated. (Sage Knowledge)
5. Black Feminist Thought (BFT)- consists of ideas produced by Black women that clarify a standpoint of and for Black women (Collins, 1989).
6. Intersectionality- the study of how different power structures interact in the lives of minorities, specifically black women. A key aspect of intersectionality lies in its recognition that multiple oppressions are not each suffered separately but rather as a single, synthesized experience. (Crenshaw, 1989).
7. Highest/Higher research institutions- are public universities with a land grant mission, Carnegie Research designation as Highest or Higher Research Activity, without a medical school, and located in the Midwest or South.

### **Summary**

Examining the experiences of Black female professors in the tenure process will provide insight to university officials on how they can support Black female professors and improve the climate where they work. In addition, it is an opportunity for administrators to evaluate the

consistency and clarity of their tenure and promotion process. I will use narrative inquiry as the theoretical framework for this study in order to illuminate the experiences that Black female professors underwent in order to examine more than just one individual's story.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

From the 1800s through the 1960s, as higher education developed, the roles of women gradually shifted from background players into the forefront. Initially, women were not allowed to attend college, let alone teach, but through societal change-wars, laws, newly emerging professions-women slowly edged their ways into levels of higher education. Initially, women were only allowed to teach humanities. Eventually, women would make up 14% of those teaching professional courses such as mathematics, science, and medicine through the 1970s. However, these statistics would mostly prove true for White women (Parker, 2015). Once women were allowed footing in higher education, barriers were still in place preventing equal competition for jobs, especially for Black women.

Where the Black female is concerned, the path has been more daunting. According to Evans (2007), at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only 2% of all tenured professors were black females. Prior to 1990, the rare educated black female was limited to teaching in elementary schools. For those who found their way into the university setting, they were relegated to what was considered lower rank. Their jobs included counseling, coordinating meetings, stretching meager resources and organizing grassroots civil rights campaigns that improved campuses and communities (Evans, 2007). As the years progressed and Black women became professors, they found themselves with a high level of scrutiny; they were monitored and criticized more-due to a lack of Black female mentors-and therefore paid less. The trend then emerged for racial organizations to assist Black women in the area of employment since they could not stand alone on their merit. Change would not be seen until the 1970s, after equal rights legislation, whereby, black women would be hired more frequently but still at half the rate than men (Evans, 2007).

Racial minorities in general and black women in particular have historically faced racial discrimination, segregation, social isolation and indifference costing them their jobs and resulting in reduced opportunities for tenure and promotions at their workplace. Evidence indicating the experiences of black female faculty in academic institutions indicate that Black female faculty are often presented with greater challenges, encounter increased opposition, are exposed to triviality and nitpicking by colleagues, and suffer from racism more than sexism with regard to achieving tenure and tenure-track positions (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Gregory, 2001).

This study aims to discuss, highlight and critically analyze the underlying reasons behind the underrepresentation of Black female faculty in predominantly white institutions. The key purpose is to draw attention to experiences of Black female faculty in such institutions and encourage debates regarding the persistence of institutional racism, which continues to exist, despite decades of reform measures initiated to establish equality across all races and genders. The experiences of the Black female faculty in predominantly white institutions are used as a tool to not only describe the experiences and opportunities available to them with regard to tenure and tenure track positions but also highlight the serious imbalance and gap between the percentage of Black female faculty with tenure and tenure track positions as compared to the national data, based on their race and gender representations and education. The guiding questions used for the purpose of this study include: (1) What are the experiences of Black females at public higher/highest research activity PWIs as they pursued tenure? (2) What role has mentorship played in their experiences in academia? and (3) What recommendations would they offer to other Black females pursuing a career in academia?

This chapter aims to explore the underlying factors responsible for the underrepresentation of tenured Black female faculty at predominantly white institutions. This is done through a structured theoretical framework, comprised of Black Feminist Thought. These theories are used to provide the basic groundwork, upon which the factors responsible for the existing state of Black female faculty members shall be explored and critically analyzed through review of relevant literature.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This theoretical framework shall be used as a guide to describe the experiences of Black female professors at select public higher/highest research activity institutions. The issues faced by these women shall be discussed from multiple perspectives, which include discussions based on race, gender as well as class. These factors are often known to negatively affect the experiences of Black women in various social and professional fields limiting their access to resources and preventing their professional growth and development. The theory used to help guide this section is Black Feminist Thought.

**Black Feminist Thought.** Black feminist thought is a critical social theory that helps in envisioning the experiences of black women and their day-to-day encounters with concepts of social injustice and discrimination. The theory speculates that the historical and cultural experiences of Black women, which are mired in subordination, alienation and servitude in a predominantly white community and nation, offer them an added advantage in the form of a unique access to view the social conditions they are exposed to (White, 2001; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Waters & Conway, 2007; Collins, 2004; Smedley, 2007). This perspective includes inherent strategies used by them to counter challenges presented by their external and extremely



hostile environment, and foster group survival while enabling structural transformation (Sulé, 2008).

This unique perspective or worldview of the Black female is the underlying concept of the black feminist thought. According to Collins (2002) although all Blacks experience some form of social alienation motivated due to their race, their individual responses to such institutional racism differs based on their age, gender, and prior experiences. This offers them a unique standpoint or perspective to look at and analyze the environment around them (Zamani, 2003; Smedley, 2007). The black feminist thought contends that since the Black female represents two similar yet distinct groups which can be categorized based on race and gender, both of which have been historically marginalized by society, these women of color, have a unique advantage of analyzing and understanding the perspectives, needs and aspirations of members of their own group i.e., fellow Black females (Simien, 2006; Collins, 2004).

The concept of Black feminist thought encompasses four key themes, which include the experiences of the Black women. The first theme includes their own personal accounts of the experiences in their respective fields of work. The second theme comprises of the use of dialogue which refers to their awareness and understanding regarding the significance of establishing strong positive social networks, to rely on in times of need or crisis and build strong personal and professional relationships with members of their own group in order to counter the challenges faced such as forced isolation in predominantly white institutions (Collins, 2000). Caring is yet another crucial theme of the black feminist thought which entails the use of expression and emotion as tools to collect evidence and information regarding the plight of their fellow colleagues and use the knowledge to gain an insight into and critically analyze their unique experiences (Collins, 2002). Lastly the theme of personal accountability is also an essential

element of black feminist thought which refers to the use of available knowledge in the face of complete lack of objectivity. Collins (2002) stated that in order to accurately understand and analyze the experiences and perspectives of the black female in any social and /or professional setting it is imperative to encourage such studies by Black females themselves since it helps in effectively assessing the extent of factors contributing to their collective experiences.

The application of this theory to understand the experiences of black female faculty in predominantly white institutions with regard to their accessibility to tenure and tenure-track positions, as compared to their white male counterparts, help in effectively interpreting their experiences. Furthermore, the use of this theory also acts as an efficient interpretative tool which uses the historical cultural marginalization of the black community and leverage that knowledge by applying it to a relatively smaller environment - that of predominantly white institutions.

### **Relevant Literature**

Decades after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, that essentially abolished the desegregation of Black Americans in the education system, implicit and subtle segregation of the said community continues to persist within the American education system, especially so in predominantly white institutions. Such institutional desegregation and targeted prejudicial treatment of racial minorities include differential treatment with regard to promotion as well as tenure systems (Moore, Alexander, and Lemelle, 2010; Weems, 2003). This is indicated by a substantially lower percentage of Black tenured and tenure-track female employees in predominantly white institutions (Gay & Howard, 2000).

The academic environment and the opportunities available to Black women have improved significantly over the decades. However their representation in positions of authority, access to resources and consideration for tenure and tenure-track positions in academic

institutions continue to remain unchanged. Black female faculty are still marginalized (Turner, 2002) compelled to work twice as hard as their white male counterparts (Alexander & Moore, 2008; Harlow, 2003); continuously made to prove their worth and capabilities, entrusted with additional professional burdens which combined, affect their chances of availing tenure and tenure-track positions. Moreover the lack of Black women in similar positions further compounds and aggravates the issue, resulting in added stress caused by lack of professional or emotional support available to such minority women to deal with the challenges imposed on them by their external environment, which is often hostile and uncooperative (Evans, 2007).

Historical research carried out over the years to understand and highlight the key reasons behind the significantly lower percentage of black female tenure and tenure-track employees across various prominent institutions in the U.S., suggest that such low rates of representation are due to the difficulties faced by Black female faculty in successfully matriculating through the tenure process. Furthermore, statistics have historically and consistently indicated that out of the total 61 percent of prospective Black faculty, graduating from academic institutions, only 2.9 percent succeed in receiving tenure from institutions (Gregory, 1999). Also, the tenure and retention rates for Black faculty members is relatively lower in various academic institutions across the U.S., resulting in lower rates of black female tenure and tenure track professors (Gregory, 1999).

The results continue to remain unchanged in the years following Gregory's study (1999). In a report published by the National Center for Educational Statistics, on the employees of post-secondary institutions in the U.S., in 2010, it was observed that the percentage of Black tenure or tenure-track professors, in academic institutions was significantly lower, comprising of a mere 5

percent of the total tenured staff, as compared to the white professors with tenure or tenure track positions (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Grinder, 2010).

Various studies have supported and added to the existing literature indicating the systematic exclusion of Black female faculty from achieving the ranks of full professorship despite their eligibility, as compared to their white male counterparts (Ginther & Khan, 2012). In a study carried out by Hurtado et al., (2008) it was observed that Black women were less likely to be considered for tenure, and were often passed over in favor of their white male counterparts. Some researchers have attributed such underrepresentation of female Black faculty in the academy, to institutional and departmental environment as well as attitudes of the management in relevant departments. Liefshitz et al., (2011) noted that the social exclusion and lack of opportunities to interact with fellow like-minded faculty members prevented the Black professors from effectively collaborating, interacting or networking with their counterparts, in turn resulting in fewer chances of achieving full professorship or tenure. Furthermore, the situation is worse for female faculty of color, since they are compelled to constantly challenge the dual factors - that of racial minority as well as gender, which have been historically subject to prejudice and discrimination (Liefshitz et al., 2011; Ginther & Kahn, 2012).

### **Effects of Mentorship and Socialization on Tenure and Promotion**

The relationship between mentors and faculty contribute in bearing positive outcomes, for the faculty members, depending on the quality and frequency of such mentorship. Traditional mentoring entails adoption of an informal process by the mentors in a bid to guide their protégées to effectively navigate through the complex administrative procedures and departmental environment (Washburn, 2007). Mentoring for instance, as a form of professional integration is known to be highly effective in improving the probabilities of black female faculty

in availing tenure and tenure-track positions in predominantly white institutions (Diggs, Wade & Galindo, 2009). This study indicated that having more than one mentor would be beneficial because it would bring different resources, support and experiences. In addition, they noted the establishment of a community of scholars of color was important for support of their work. Research indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between mentoring and improved work performance, productivity, job efficiency and career improvement and advancement. Furthermore, effective mentoring is also directly associated with improved recognition by the departmental heads of the work and contributions of the faculty member receiving mentorship, as well as a significant improvement in personal gratification (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 2004). However, such benefits are likely to be more pronounced and effective when the mentor and the protégé are of the same race as well as gender and share similar interests in terms of subjects of research or academic interests (Budge, 2006). Similarly peer-mentoring where both the parties are of similar rank and experience (in contrast with the traditional mentoring process where the mentor is significantly older both in age as well as rank and experience) can also prove to be useful for the faculty members (Darwin and Palmer, 2009). Peer mentorship is known to offer increased benefits to the faculty in terms of improved social networks which may act as a support system for the faculty on professional as well as personal front, instill confidence in them, pave way for professional career advancement and significantly reduce social isolation (Darwin & Palmer, 2009).

Socialization is also one of the strong influential factors that help in determining the course of growth for the faculty. There is strong evidence indicating the significance and relevance of social inclusion and interaction with mentors and colleagues on availing tenure in particular and professional success in general (Lucas & Murray, 2007). The process of

socialization refers to the various ways in which a newly appointed faculty member learns the ways of the work environment, the interpersonal communication with mentors and colleagues that guide their performance and informal rules taught to them by mentors through prior experience, exposing and familiarizing the faculty with the processes that are likely to help them avail tenure in the academic institution (Reynolds, 1992; LaRocco & Bruns, 2006; Johnson, 2001). The ability and opportunity to successfully navigate the work environment enables the faculty to get a grip on the department politics and access to all unspoken rules and department culture which in turn help them in achieving tenure. However, black faculty and particularly black female faculty are compelled to suffer social isolation and neglect from their white colleagues (Phelps, 1995; Johnsrud & DesJarlais, 1994) resulting in lesser appreciation and acknowledgement of their work and worth as compared to their white male counterparts. Also Black female faculty often receives lesser professional and social support in predominantly white institutions (Ponjuan, Martin Conley, and Trower, 2011). According to Stanley (2007) such lack of support is attributed to the work environment and department culture, which has a history of social exclusion of Black faculty especially in predominantly white institutions.

Rosser (2004) asserts that the underrepresentation of women of color in academia in higher positions, deprive such women of much needed moral and professional support. Such lack of role models or mentors, increases their risk of failure to efficiently comprehend the demands of their profession as well as the effective ways to approach their assigned tasks (Rosser, 2004; Liefshitz et al. 2011), which in turn negatively affects their competency, lowers their self-belief and confidence and reduces their sense of belonging in the positions held by them (Ponjuan et al., 2011). Research has indicated that there is a strong connection between mentorship and social networks at work and the likelihood of achieving tenure. A mentor is able to efficiently

offer guidance regarding the ways to receive tenure, some of which are often unstated and can only be gained through experience (Williams & Williams, 2006). The lack of such mentors available for women of color, hinder their chances of effectively exploiting the professional opportunities available to them influencing their acknowledgement, experiences and consideration for tenure in such institutions (Rosser, 2004; Preston, 2004).

Mentoring is extremely crucial for Black female faculty because it ensures a support system both on the professional as well as social front and guide them to achieve tenure. Research indicates that the availability of a mentor in the place of work helps in reducing stress caused by isolation in predominantly white institutions and help the Black female faculty in enriching their work experience (Zellers, Howard, and Barcic, 2008). Davis (2008) stated that mentorship enables the Black female faculty to positively approach their tasks, improve their work efficiency and help them achieve tenure and retention (Stanley, 2006; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 2004). Furthermore it also enables the Black female faculty members to actively pursue and achieve scholarships, help them publish their research and increase opportunities for funding in the process (Gregory, 2001). Such access to informal networks for the Black faculty offers them a platform to interact with same-gender, and same-race faculty, enriching their experience and increasing their opportunities for tenure, granting them professional success in the long run (Turner & Thompson, 1993; Frierson, 1990; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Also there is ample evidence, which indicates that cross-race mentoring also has a significant and positive impact on tenure for Black female faculty (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, and Cervero, 2004; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

## **Under-representation of Black Female Professors**

The under-representation of female Black female professors in tenure and tenure track positions can also be explained due to their often excessive service assignments. Furthermore, the burden placed on Black female faculty are often unreasonable. They are neglected, their opinions and efforts are undermined by their colleagues, and are often burdened with responsibilities which result in limiting their opportunities to focus and contribute to their respective fields of work and /or carry out research. Moreover, despite the roles assigned to them by the institutions, they are often ignored for review for tenure (Aguire, 2000). Such social alienation at the place of work affects their productivity and since productivity is directly and strongly linked to awarding of tenure and promotion, it drastically reduces the opportunities available to Black female faculty, resulting in their under-representation in tenure and tenure-track positions in predominantly white institutions (Fair-weather, 2002; Trower, 2008). Furthermore, Fairweather (2002) also argued that the workplace environment and the policies adopted by the academic institutions, directly affect the effectiveness of the faculty such prejudicial treatment proves to be detrimental for the minority faculty members in the long-run. Furthermore, research also indicated that the policies surrounding tenure in predominantly white institutions are not only antiquated but also tend to discriminately favor the white faculty members (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Rice & Sorcinelli, 2002) prompting debates regarding the need for change across all academic institutions in the country (Altbach, 2001; Rice & Sorcinelli, 2002). The studies found that interviewee' observations about the process varied by institutional type, discipline, and professional field. There was widespread agreement about the nature, depth, and seriousness of the problems with the tenure process. In addition, the study noted that new faculty indicated feeling overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities and not having



time. However, despite mounting evidence indicating the role of antiquated policies (for example too much reliance on student evaluations which have been proven to be racially as well as gender biased) with regard to tenure in predominantly white institutions largely favoring the white faculty members over their racial minority counterparts, there continues to be a serious lack of effort to bring about institutional change. Such lack of effort is attributed to the ambiguity in guidelines surrounding tenure by the American Association of University Professors (O'Meara, 2000). The tenure policies, at many universities, continue to remain subjective and open to interpretation resulting in systematic discrimination of racial minorities and the lack of opportunities available to them, for awarding tenure and tenure-track positions despite eligibility. Thus, unless these policies, rules and regulations surrounding tenure are fully reformed, restructured and made inclusive in consideration of the minority faculty members, the underrepresentation of Black female faculty at predominantly white institutions is likely to persist. University officials may want to consider innovative ideas such as one used at the North Carolina State. New tenure-track professors sit down with administrators and complete a "statement of mutual expectations" that clearly tells faculty members what kind of work and how much of it are expected in six key areas, including research, teaching, and outreach. North Carolina State is setting new standards on clarity in the tenure process (Trower, 2012).

With regard to the experiences of Black female faculty about tenure, most of them described their experiences to be too burdensome, unnecessarily taxing, unfair, and inappropriate (Myers, 2002). This in turn can be explained by their deliberate alienation in the workplace, persistent negligent attitudes of their co-workers and disrespectful behavior of the students. Also, despite the hard work and effort put in by Black female faculty members, and their strict adherence to the guidelines laid down by the academic institutions they work for, they are often

passed over for tenure and are perpetually stuck in the process (Myers, 2002). Research revealed that the academic culture and environment are often unfairly favorable to those of similar socio-cultural backgrounds (Hu-DeHart, 2000). Thus, the research, approach and attitudes of white male faculty is often readily accepted and acknowledged since their perspectives are considered more mainstream, resulting in greater acceptance of white male faculty for tenure and promotion (Hu-DeHart, 2000). The university environment is thus more favorable to white male faculty as compared to the racial minority faculty members. The Black faculty, experience a completely contrasting treatment, marred with stereotyping and social prejudice, where their knowledge and expertise is constantly challenged resulting in fewer faculty members from the racial minority groups to be considered for tenure or tenure-track process (Turner & Myers, 2000). Turner and Myers (2000) further observed that the differential treatment of white and Black faculty extends to the expectations regarding execution of their respective duties. For instance, the white faculty members are entrusted lesser roles and responsibilities entailing lesser burden and availability of more time on hand to carry out their research in their chosen fields. The Black faculty members, on the other hand, are compelled to be a part of more communities, as minority representatives or to fulfill obligations imposed on academic institutions to enforce and encourage diversity (Myers, 2000; Aguirre, 2000). Thus, the minority faculty members are often observed to be more stressed than their white male counterparts, resulting in missed opportunities or failure to fulfill requirements which make them eligible for obtaining tenure (Gregory, 1999; Aguirre, 2000). This makes them feel ignored, inferior to their white male counterparts, and less certain of their future.

Research carried out by Black faculty members are also known to be devalued or ignored, if the subject of research deals with minority concerns since such topics are not

considered 'mainstream' (Turner & Myers, 2000). Any research work carried out from a Black perspective is not regarded credible enough to grant scholarship (Locke, 1998) hence diluting their work and effort and restricting their chance of availing tenure in predominantly white institutions, which are designed to function in accordance with the perspectives of the white male faculty members which are more 'mainstream'. The research work carried out by the faculty members is a crucial element for availing tenure as well as promotion. However such constant disregard for the research carried out by Black female professors is likely to result in lower representation of members from such communities. In many instances, BFP indicated their research topics were questioned and devalued because they focused on multiculturalism as opposed to the mainstream agenda (Jones, Hwang, & Bustamante, 2015).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Black female faculty at PWIs have faced barriers that have extended as far back as the 1800s when they were totally excluded to the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when only 2.9% (American Council on Education, 2010) of all faculty were Black and female. Due to the low instances of Black female faculty at predominantly white institutions, it is imperative to research how Black female professors are experiencing the tenure and promotion process and what can be done to help retain the professors who are currently in academia. As of 2015, the National Center of Education Statistics (most current data available) reported that there are 513,034 full-time faculty in degree granting postsecondary institutions in the United States. The report indicated that 218,955 are White males and only 14,133 are Black females. More importantly, research must be done to determine why those Black females who do enter the professoriate leave once they enter it. To understand the plight of Black female faculty, the researcher must look at those faculty members that have successfully navigated the terrain to determine how the number of tenure-track Black female faculty at public high-research PWIs can be increased.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, the researcher will explore the tenure experiences of Black female faculty at select public higher/highest research activity institutions to gather information that may be helpful to other Black female faculty pursuing a career as a tenured professor. Secondly, the researcher will explore the role of mentoring and support systems for Black female faculty at select public higher/highest research activity institutions to determine their effectiveness of retention in the academy.

This study will examine the following research questions:

- (1) What are the experiences of Black females at select public higher/highest research activity PWIs as they pursued tenure?
- (2) What recommendations would they offer to other Black female faculty at PWIs pursuing a career in academia?
- (3) What role has mentorship played in the experiences of Black female faculty in academia at public PWIs?

### **Methodology**

Research is a search for knowledge, a scientific and systematic quest for pertinent information on a specific topic (Kothari, 2004). It is the art of scientific investigation. The purpose of basic research is knowledge for the sake of knowledge and an understanding of how the world operates (Patton, 2002). Research is necessary to ascertain how certain conditions in education need to be addressed. In order to conduct appropriate educational research, it is essential to determine the fitting methodology for each study that is performed. Methodology is a way of thinking about and studying social reality (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In educational research, methodology can be interpreted as the lens through which one looks at the world to garner a social perspective of its context. Researchers must be cognizant of all research approaches to determine which research approach would be most appropriate for their research study. Methodology is a way of thinking about and viewing the world so the research can enrich the field that is studied. There are three basic approaches to research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The two major research paradigms (methodologies) used in human sciences are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative and Qualitative research designs differ in terms of their epistemological, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings (Yilmaz, 2013).

Historically, quantitative research designs have served as the privileged method of knowledge construction in academia (Creswell, 2009). In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the necessity for qualitative research design increased to address concerns of inequality and social justice (Sprague, 2005). Feminist researchers thought that a new approach was necessary to challenge the dominantly accepted notions of women's inferiority and highlight their experiences as a valid method to add to knowledge. Sprague (2005) noted that feminists often use qualitative designs to create platforms that allow for the voices of women to be heard and not silenced as most often occurs through male researchers who dominate the field.

The aim of this section is to discuss the differences between the two major research approaches, qualitative and quantitative, and to determine which approach would be most useful to gather information about the experiences of Black female faculty at public highest/higher research activity PWIs. Both quantitative and qualitative researchers use empirical observations to address research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2013). As discussed in Creswell (2014), researchers must think through the philosophical worldview that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to that worldview and the specific methods or procedures that will translate the approach into practice. The term worldview is interchangeably used with paradigms, epistemologies and ontologies.

### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research studies things in their natural setting therefore, qualitative research can have different meanings to different people. Yilmaz (2013) posits that qualitative research design assumes that knowledge is not independent of the knower, but socially constructed and that reality is neither static nor fixed. Qualitative research aims to provide a thorough understanding of the viewpoints and histories or the experiences of those being researched within

the context of their settings and experiences (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003).

Qualitative research represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparisons to quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research has many forms that it can take. The five major approaches to qualitative research are narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. These forms of research require data collection through face-to-face interviews, observations, and the analysis of written documents. Qualitative research produces data rich in description. It is concerned with the process, context, interpretation, meaning and understanding through inductive reasoning (Yilmaz, 2013). Qualitative research should contain an action agenda for reform (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research at present consists of four paradigms: (post-) positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical (Marxist) and feminist-post structural which hinge on three constructs: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Hiratsuka, 2014). The major characteristics of traditional qualitative research are induction, discovery, exploration, theory/hypothesis generation, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and qualitative analysis (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Qualitative research is considered to be much more fluid than quantitative research in that it anticipates discovering novel or unanticipated findings (Bryman, 1984). In addition, Patton (2002) notes that qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in depth and detail and approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis which contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative research is “a complex, interconnected family of terms and concepts, and assumptions” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative researchers are frequently more interested in learning the story behind particular individuals and groups. They may choose from among the

possibilities such as narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study (Creswell, 2014). Data collected using qualitative methods can be both analyzed and interpreted descriptively or numerically (Bamberger, 2000). Researchers use a theoretical lens or perspective in qualitative research which becomes a transformative perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data is collected and analyzed and provides a call for action (Creswell, 2014). Patton (2002) indicated that qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection that usually come from fieldwork (p.4):

- 1) in-depth open-ended interview-yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge.
- 2) direct observation- consists of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience.
- 3) written documents- document analysis includes studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from various sources including memoranda, reports, diaries and open-ended written responses to questionnaires.

The major characteristics of traditional qualitative research are induction, discovery, exploration, theory/hypothesis generation, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and qualitative analysis (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the sight where participants experience the issue or problem under study (Creswell, 2014). There are no rules for sample size in qualitative research; it, depends on what one wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, have credibility and be done with available time and resources (Patton, 2002). Creswell (2014) suggests the flowing steps when approaching qualitative research (p.196-201):



1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis-transcribe interviews, type field notes, catalog, sort, and visualize the data into different types depending on the sources of information.
2. Read or look at all of the data-after completing step 1, the researcher should ask themselves: What general ideas are participants saying? What is the tone of the ideas? What is the impression of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information?
3. Start coding all of the data-this is the process of organizing the data into bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins. The researcher should segment pictures and sentences into categories with a term.
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. They should display multiple perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence.
5. Use a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis. This may include a chronology of events, the detailed discussion of several themes or a discussion with interconnecting themes.
6. Make an interpretation of the findings or the results-What were the lessons learned? When qualitative researchers use a theoretical lens, they can form interpretations that call for action agendas for reform and change.

Data collection involves gaining permissions, conducting a good qualitative sampling strategy, developing means for recording information both digitally and on paper, storing the data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise (Creswell, 2013). For a qualitative study to be credible and trustworthy, the data must first and foremost be sufficiently descriptive and include

a great deal of pure description of people, activities, interactions, and settings so that the reader or reviewer can understand what occurred and how it occurred (Yilmaz, 2013).

### **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative Inquiry is an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative research is a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives (Creswell, 2014). Narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for a person's ordinary lived experiences (Clandinin, 2013). Moen (2006) noted that a life lived is what actually has happened and life experiences consist of images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings as they are known to the person who has experienced them. Part of being human is to narrate stories to ourselves and to others (Plummer, 1995). A wide variety of methods can be used in a narrative-based research, including interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus meetings and analysis of personal texts (Lester, 1999). Narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of the people involved (Clandinin, 2013).

### **Research Methodology**

In recent years, more attention has been drawn to the lack of diversity on many college campuses in America however, specific attention has not been paid to the lack of Black female faculty. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will employ a qualitative research methodology using a narrative research analysis. Qualitative research methodology is appropriate for this particular analysis because it allows for the expression and interpretations of one's own life (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Four key terms in narrative research are living, telling, retelling and reliving whereas people live out stories and tell stories of their living

(Clandinin, 2013). Clandinin and Connelly (1990) further noted that narrative research is increasingly used in educational experiences because teachers are storytellers who individually lead storied lives. These characteristics are well suited for this study, which explores the experiences of Black female tenured and tenure-track professors at select public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions. There is very little research on Black female professors at PWIs. Studies pertaining to BFPs at PWIs are limited because the experiences of the dominant group (white males) are viewed as more important by society therefore these studies are often excluded from mainstream journals. Etter-Lewis (1993) argued, “the large group norm, when applied to scholarly research, the large group norm, which creates a singular reality can be observed by the conspicuous absence of African American women from major studies” (p.xvi).

It is my intention to explore the theoretical perspective of Black Female Professors through Black Feminist Thought. The challenges of Black Female Professors at select public higher/highest research activity institutions in academe need to be understood and discussed just as it has been for the dominant race.

### **Choosing Participants**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher’s target population was Black female tenured professors at select public highest/higher research activity PWIs. In order to find participants for the study, the researcher looked at each of the 13 universities within the specified data set to first determine how many Black female tenured and tenure-track professors were present at the universities. The information was either available on the universities website or was requested from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. After determining the number of Black female tenured and tenure-track professors at the universities, the researcher attempted to

identify each one and solicited their participation in the study. This is called homogeneous purposive sampling. The idea behind purposefully selecting the participants is to help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014). To maintain anonymity, each university was assigned a pseudonym. Additionally, the researcher consulted with individuals in the higher education community for possible participants. This is commonly referred to as snowball or chain referral which is a method that has been widely used in qualitative sociological research (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). The method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know others who share or know others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest. Once the researcher selects participants via snowball sampling, she will solicit assistance from each participant in helping to identify other participants. As each participant is identified, the researcher will email or hand deliver a letter requesting participation in the study. If they agree to participate, the researcher will send an electronic questionnaire where potential participants will complete biographical and institutional data as well as a consent and disclosure form. The researcher will also ask that each participant choose a pseudonym for their interview to ensure anonymity. The biographical form will be used to obtain background information to verify that participants meet the criteria for the study.

### **Participant Selection**

The target for this study was women who identified as Black (African American) and are tenured (associate or full professors) at select public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institutions. The 6-8 participants for this study were selected from the group of tenured BFP available within the selected data set. The rank and identified race of participants will be specifically noted when making selections. The researcher initiated an online questionnaire

through Qualtrics that was emailed to the target population. Participants met the following criteria:

1. Must identify as Black (African American)- U.S. born
2. Must identify as female
3. Must be employed at a select public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institution
4. Must be a tenured (associate or full) professor at a selected PWI

After the initial questionnaire was completed by the prospective participants and analyzed by the researcher, interviews were scheduled where a list of formulated questions were asked in semi-structured interviews. Participants elected to participate in the survey prior to completing the online survey.

### **Data Collection**

Narrative interviews are regarded as the primary strategy through which human existence is considered meaningful (Clandinin, 2013). Patton (2002) noted that the purpose of interviewing is to allow the researcher to enter into the person's perspective which begins with the assumption that the perspectives of others are meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. Once the researcher received confirmed acceptance of participation from a participant, they were contacted via phone and/or email to set up the initial interview. The researcher used a series of open ended questions allowing each participant to freely speak and expound on their experiences. By limiting the amount of scripted questions, this allowed the researcher to develop additional questions throughout the interview based upon the responses of the participant. During each interview, the researcher recorded the interview on two separate recording devices to ensure that data was not lost. In addition, the researcher took field notes as needed. Follow-up

interviews were not requested as the participants confirmed the data utilizing member checking by checking the transcriptions for accuracy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe member checks as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314) in a study. It consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account.

### **Interview Design**

There are the basic underpinnings of narrative research (Moen, 2006). They are:

1. Human beings organize their experiences of the world into narratives.
2. The stories that are told depend on the individual’s past and present experiences.
3. Multivoicedness occurs in narratives.

To complete this study, interviews with participants were conducted. Below is the interview protocol for the interviews. Face validity was utilized with four Black female professors prior to interviewing the participants. They gave feedback and validated the interview questions created by the researcher. Face validity has been defined as reflecting the extent to which a measure reflects what it is intended to measure (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

## Research Questions and Guiding Protocol Relationship

<p>1. What are the experiences of tenured Black female faculty at PWIs in Louisiana as they pursued tenure?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was the tenure process at your university when you underwent it? Is it uniform across academic departments, schools, and colleges? How did your institution identify tenure and promotion committee members at that time?</li> <li>2. Please tell me about your experiences with the process. How many levels, who reviewed, and what was the minimal number of votes or approvals required?</li> <li>3. Were the requirements or minimal standards for tenure and promotion provided to you? If so, when? If not, why?</li> <li>4. Is the tenure and promotion process the same now as it was when you completed it? If not, how is it different? Do you perceive it to be more or less challenging now?</li> <li>5. Did you receive a unanimous vote for tenure (meaning each level voted in support of you earning tenure)?</li> <li>6. Do you feel the tenure process was fair?</li> <li>7. Do you feel the tenure process was unbiased?</li> <li>8. How would you describe the role of politics in your tenure process?</li> <li>9. Tell me about your interactions with other faculty members on your campus. Did you receive support from them during and/or throughout the tenure process?</li> <li>10. What issues, if any, have you been confronted as a Black female professor seeking tenure or post tenure?</li> </ol>
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<p>2. What role has mentorship played in their experiences in academia?</p> <p>3. What recommendations would they offer to other Black female faculty at PWIs pursuing a career in academia?</p>	<p>11. What role did mentorship play in your pursuit of tenure, if any?</p> <p>12. From what sources of support did you identify upon entering academia and throughout the tenure process?</p> <p>13. Would you say you have served as a mentor? If so, to who? Why? Do you feel mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process? If so, why? If not, why?</p> <p>14. What advice would you offer to other Black females pursuing tenure at a PWI, particularly at a Highest/Higher Research Institution?</p>
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### Interview Logistics

Interviews for this study were set to a six-week time frame that was used to solicit, screen, interview and transcribe interviews. Interviews were scheduled for an hour and a half time slot. Interviews were conducted via videoconference or at the location of the participant's choice that was free of background noise and interruptions. As required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the interview was guided by approved questions however, due to the open-ended questions, additional questions and clarifications were made in order to further understand the participant's experiences. At any time, the participant could refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study which was stated in the informed consent. After each interview, recordings were transcribed using the pseudonym chosen by the participant and the university was assigned a pseudonym as well. Interviews may have been conducted in person, via



videoconference, Skype, Google Hangout, or FaceTime. Due to travel and time constraints, the interviewees were given the option to utilize one of these forms of interviewing.

### **Data Analysis**

Creating a narrative is primarily a process that organizes human experiences into meaningful episodes (Moen, 2006). After each interview, the researcher transcribed the interviews and field notes. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher analyzed the data and coded for common themes. According to Creswell (2014), developing a coding system requires several steps:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis- transcribe, type field notes, catalogue visual material and sort and arrange data.
2. Read and look at all of the data- start to record general thoughts about the data at this stage.
3. Start coding-organize the data by bracketing chunks and writing words representing a category in the margins. Label the categories with a term
4. Use the coding to generate a description of the setting or the people as well as categories or themes for analysis. In narrative analysis, the codes should display multiple perspectives from the individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence.
5. Use narrative passages to convey the findings of the analysis.
6. Make an interpretation of the findings or the results- What were the lessons learned? (p.197-200)

Once the researcher developed codes, she listened to the tapes to verify the previous data as well as note if there are any additional codes noticed. Once the interviews had been transcribed and

coded, the researcher returned the information to the participants for member checking. Member checking increases validity in qualitative research. Participants were emailed a copy for verification. The researcher would make adjustments as needed. As stated in Creswell (2014), validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account.

### **Subjectivity**

The intention of this research is to gather data regarding the perspectives of research participants of tenured Black female professors at select public higher/highest research activity PWIs. Race and gender were the primary components that played a significant role in this study. This study used Black Feminist Thought to understand the experiences of tenured Black female professors at select public higher/highest research activity institutions. Since I shared the same characteristics (Black and female) as my participants, we may have shared similar professional experiences of marginality. Although we share the same ethnic background and gender and may have had similar experiences, I cannot fully understand what it means to be a Black female who has pursued tenure at a PWI. Hammersley (2000) noted that researchers cannot be detached from her/his presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise. However, it was important that the researcher separated their own experiences from those of the participants. It was vitally important that the researcher not convey any ethnic messages during interviewing and acknowledge personal biases and assumptions held regarding the research (Creswell, 2013). Though it was the researcher's intent to display objectivity throughout data collection, analysis and presentation, one must concede that perceptions and inferences may have been

affected by the subconscious biases the researcher held as previously indicated by Hammersley (2000).

### **Ethics in Qualitative Research**

Bogden and Bilken (1998) note that informed consent and protection of human subjects from harm are the two issues that dominate traditional ethics in research. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, the BFP signed consent forms agreeing to participate in the study. The consent forms provided a description of the study, how the study would be conducted and how confidentiality would be maintained. The researcher's role and responsibility was to maintain anonymity. To insure that identity was protected, special precautions were employed to protect identifying information. Participants chose a pseudonym prior to the interview which was used throughout the interview. In addition, the universities were assigned pseudonyms as well. All interviews were secured in password protected electronic storage that was only accessible by the researcher.

### **Summary**

Public institutions in America are getting more diverse each semester as the population of the country changes. Although the student body are becoming more diverse, change has not been evident in the faculty at PWIs. The numbers of Black female professors at PWIs is almost non-existent when compared to white males and even white females (National Center for Educational Statistics). Little or no attention has been paid to why there are so few BFPs at PWIs.

In this study, the researcher hoped to better understand the challenges that tenured Black female professors at public higher/highest research activity PWIs have experienced. In this

study, the use of Black feminist thought was used to analyze how race, gender, cultural background and experiences have played a role in these experiences.

As a Black female that has worked for many years in public education, I have some perspective on what it may be like for BFP at PWIs however, I cannot fully understand the experience. As a student and an educator, I have a strong belief that it is imperative that students of color encounter faculty of color. Research indicated that these experiences help students of color to persist. Addressing this issue can bring light to how universities can retain BFF and encourage Black females to enter the professoriate.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the qualitative research methods that will guide data collection and analysis. A narrative qualitative study approach will be implemented. Those asked to participate in the study are females who self-identify as Black and who are tenured professors at a public higher/highest research activity predominantly white institution. Multiple forms of data were collected including interviews and documentation. Data was analyzed and coded. Throughout data collection, analysis and interpretation, measures were taken to ensure that rigor, credibility and trustworthiness were present within the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

This narrative study documents the experiences of Black female professors at select public highest/higher research activity predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in the United States. The seven participants reflected upon and conveyed the stories of their experiences as they embarked upon the tenure process at their perspective institutions. The stories were obtained through semi-structured open-ended interviews. Similar to the findings of other researchers (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Gregory, 2001), the professors told stories of isolation, betrayal, nitpicking and triviality and lack of or minimal mentorship. In a majority of the cases, the professors reported being the only Black (African American) within their department and in many cases the only person of color (POC) with their departments and often within their colleges. In 2017, when universities are becoming increasingly more diverse, it is problematic that the faculty does not mirror the diversity of the student body. As previously referenced (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003) noted that the presence of BFP is necessary at an institution in order to help the retention of Black students at PWIs. Furthermore, as previously referenced (Evans, 2007) students must experience scholarship that advances a range of experiences, theories, and frameworks. This can only be accomplished by increasing the number of BFP and other faculty of color to have academic experiences that mirror the diversity that students experience in their classrooms and in society. In many instances, majority faculty lack experience working with minority groups. Collaboration between faculty of color and majority faculty would allow a greater understanding and acceptance of differences which would directly influence relationships amongst faculty while fostering an understanding between majority faculty and minority students. In addition, it is important for students at PWIs to see diverse faculty groups in order to promote the same response in students. Faculty members cannot

expect students to collaborate across racial lines when they only work with faculty from the same ethnic backgrounds.

This study serves several purposes. First, this study contributes to the literature on Black female professorship and the tenure and promotion process. Secondly, this study hopes to provide a context by which university officials and faculty responsible for hiring, diversity, and retention might understand the factors that lead to BFP leaving academia and what they can do to successfully hire BFP and help them reach full professorship. Lastly, the hope is that Black female educators considering academia can heed the advice of these seven women to be prepared during the recruiting process as well as through the promotion and tenure process. Following an introduction to the institutional pool, an overview of each participant profile, a visual representation of participant demographics, and a thematic analysis of emergent themes conclude this chapter. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the experiences of Black female professors at select public highest/higher research activity PWIs as they pursued tenure?
2. What recommendations would they offer to other Black female professors at public, highest/higher research activity PWIs pursuing a career in academia?
3. What role has mentorship played in their experiences in academia?

### **Core Themes of Black Feminist Thought**

Central to Black Feminist Thought is the importance of giving Black women a platform to be heard- a voice (Collins, 2000; Herbert 2012; Hooks 1989). This chapter identifies the emerging themes and how they relate conceptually to four core themes in Black Feminist Thought, (1) Work, Family and Black Women's Oppression, (2) Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images, (3) The Power of Self-Definition, (4) Rethinking Black Women's

Activism. In the analysis of the data collected from the seven participants, these four themes will be utilized in the interpretation of the findings. Black Feminist Thought suggests that Black women experience the world differently from those who are not Black and female. Although they experience the world differently than other genders and other races, the literature does not suggest that their experiences are always the same however, they have similar experiences. Black women's individuality causes their reactions to experiences to be different. The researcher found similarities within the experiences and those experiences were placed into themes and sub-themes that supported them.

### **Institutional Pool**

Universities were chosen from a selection of the 13 universities known as the peer group institutions for Louisiana State University's flagship 2020 agenda. Flagship 2020 institutions were chosen since they represent a group of institutions with similar characteristics which narrows down a broad range of institutions within the United States. These institutions are public universities with a land grant mission, Carnegie Research designation as Highest or Higher Research Activity, without a medical school, and located in the Midwest or South. From this group of thirteen institutions, the rank, gender and race data of faculty at the institution was solicited from each Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Table 1 conveys the information received from seven of the thirteen universities.

Table 1

Representation of Total Faculty to African American Female Assistant, Associate,  
and Full Professors (2016)

Name of University	Total number of faculty	Number of assistant professors	Number of associate professors	Number of full professors	Percentage of Black female professors	Percentage of Black students enrolled
Sun State University	1421	16	11	4	2.19%	6.4%
Traditional University	2294	17	8	8	1.43%	3.7%
Pine Tree State University	1138	4	10	4	1.58%	11.9%
Love Life University	1002	6	6	3	1.49%	3.94%
Drill A&M University	983	21	7	6	3.45%	2.54%
Tray State A&M University	1123	3	10	3	1.42%	3.0%
University of the Beaver	745	3	4	2	1.20%	4.8%

Source: Offices of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Fall 2016

The schools reflected in the graph were issued a pseudonym. The seven universities do not directly correlate to the seven participants. The data received presented strong evidence that many highest/higher research activity institutions are still lacking in the area of Black female professors. Often when speaking to the participants, they revealed that they were the only Black female professors in their colleges and sometimes in their departments. Through their experiences, the study brought light to reasons why many Black female professors struggle to obtain tenure at public highest/higher research activity PWIs.

Table 1 supports the data presented in the literature from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) which indicated that tenured Black female professors comprised a



mere 5% of the total tenured/tenure track faculty staff. Of the seven universities presented, each university has a percentage of Black females at less than 5%. In many instances, the participants indicated that the numbers of Black tenured female professors at their prospective universities had decreased since they were at their universities. Often, they indicated that many Black women left academia before they could obtain tenure due to isolation and lack of support within their departments and throughout the university. This data supports the research previously referenced (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada and Galindo, 2009; Pittman, 2010) and confirmed the research that the opportunity to successfully navigate the work environment enables the faculty to navigate department politics which aides in the achievement of tenure. When the percentages of Black female faculty are meager on a campus, it is often difficult to develop the relationships that are necessary to develop these types of relationships.

### **Participant Profiles**

The participants in this study all identified as Black female faculty who taught at one of the select universities presented in this study. The participants were asked to complete demographic surveys to provide background data about their university, degree, age, salary, year of tenure and university attended (doctoral degree). A summary of the participants' characteristics are as follows. The participants ranged in age from 43-69 years old. At the time the interviews were conducted, five of the participants were Associate professors and two hold the rank of Professor. The participants received their doctorate degrees from universities throughout the U.S. Of the seven universities, six were public PWIs and one was a private, Catholic university. Six participants hold Ph.D. and one participant holds an Ed.D. One participant earned her doctoral degree from the university where she is employed. Two participants earned their bachelor's and master's degrees from the university where they are

currently employed. The participants were asked a series of pre-selected questions however, on most occasions new questions were generated in the interviews and were asked when deemed necessary. The questions presented were structured to gain perspective on their experiences with the tenure and promotion process at their university. In addition to the experiences with the tenure and promotion process, the participants were asked about their experiences with the three major components of the promotion and tenure process: teaching, research, and service. In addition, participants talked about their experiences with mentoring throughout the process. Each participant offered suggestions to future academicians for success in academia. The difficulty the researcher experienced with identifying Black female professors at peer group institutions was that in 2017, the number is still limited on many campuses. In total, 21 Black female professors were solicited to participate in the study. From those 21 solicitations, nine professors agreed to participate in the study and seven completed the process. Table 2 provides data obtained from the completed surveys of the seven participants. The table indicates the pseudonym selected by each participant as well as other data that was garnered from the survey.

Table 2

## Demographic Background of Participants

Pseudonym	Current Age	Salary range	Age obtained tenure	Current Rank	Year Doctorate degree earned
A.T. Simpson	53	70,000-79,000	49	Associate	2003
Ayanna	69	60,000-69,000	63	Associate	2003
Jazz	46	70,000-79,000	39	Associate	2003
Kim Jones	43	60,000-69,000	41	Associate	2007
Maria	49	90,000-99,000	36	Full Professor	1995
Marie Woods	67	70,000-79,000	46	Full Professor	1988
Umoja	62	80,000-89,000	53	Associate	1994

Source: Demographic Surveys

## Participants

The following profiles provide an overview into the experiences and spirit of each of the seven participants based on their personal interview data and observational data from the researcher. The benefit of sharing these descriptions allows for the researcher to “introduce” the participant to the reader while protecting the participant’s identity. The researcher extracted one quote from each participant that resonated from the interview.

### **A.T. Simpson-** Associate Professor

“All of these universities are flawed and they all have stop gaps for black people.”

I interviewed A.T. Simpson March 21, 2017 via video conferencing. A.T. was eager to discuss her experiences with the tenure and promotion process and stated that she thought my research was timely and relevant. A.T. is an associate professor at Love Life University (LLU) where she has been employed since 2007. Prior to working at LLU, A.T. had worked at two

other universities one of which was an HBCU and the other was a liberal arts college. She had four years of experience at the other institutions. When she came to Love Life, she was told that she would be able to go up for tenure in 2009 when her book came out. When her book came out, A.T. noted that the university reneged on its initial agreement and she was not able to go up for tenure until 2013. Another colleague, who had only been there for two years, was allowed to go up because he had it in writing that he would be able to. She and her department chair had a very volatile relationship where A.T. indicated that the chair, on one occasion, cursed her out. In addition, she indicated that he wrote in coded language on her evaluations that she was a Black bitch. When A.T. went up for tenure, she did receive tenure but it was a very ugly, hostile situation and she indicated that she had nobody to support her or come to her aid. She had an award winning book and either six to eight articles, more than was needed to get tenure. A.T. indicated that she was not informed of the requirements needed to obtain tenure when she began working at her institution. Over the years, her department chair told her that she had poor teaching evaluations from students. She later learned that her evaluations were no worse than other colleagues in her department.

**Ayanna-Associate Professor**

“It’s as though you are never good enough. It’s as though you are perpetually having to prove yourself.”

I interviewed Ayanna March 25, 2017 via video conferencing. Ayanna was eager to participate in the study especially since she was currently going through the promotion and tenure process to full professor. Ayanna is a 69 year old female who has been at her university since 2005. She earned her Ph.D. in 2003 but had spent several years at many universities as an instructor and adjunct professor. Ayanna came to Drill A&M University (DA&MU) after going

through a divorce and deciding to move back to her home town. Ayanna had previously worked at two other PWIs and one HBCU as well as working in the private sector. Ayanna indicated that when she came to DA&MU that she was the first Black female professor in that department in 2005. Ayanna had a good experience with mentorship at her university until her mentor retired. Her mentor provided her with the tenure and promotion requirements in writing. Within her college, the requirements for tenure and promotion were very different across departments. However, her university had a third year review which was a good indicator for one to know how they were progressing toward tenure. Ayanna did not have any major issues when going up for promotion and tenure from assistant to associate professor. She attributes her success to the advice of her institutional mentor and the advice of outside mentors.

#### **Jazz-Associate Professor**

“I will say this and I think that studies will bear this out, that the more diversified the academy has become, and we still have a long way to go, the harder the requirements”.

I interviewed Jazz in person on April 6, 2017. Jazz was eager to discuss the topic especially since she knew someone personally who had recently been denied tenure, unjustifiably in her opinion. Jazz began working at Tray State A&M University (TSAMU) in 2004. Although she had been a visiting assistant professor, adjunct professor, and instructor at other universities, she has been at TSAMU consistently throughout her tenure-track pursuit. Jazz noted that at TSAMU, you had a third year reappointment, a fourth year reappointment and the fourth year was the reappointment that determined whether or not you could go up for tenure. If you don't get reappointed in the fourth year, then you leave the next year. Jazz had a unanimous vote of approval for tenure in her college but one opposing vote in the department. She attributes her success to a supportive department. She indicated that overall, she has had a positive

experience at her university but knows of other persons of color who have had a more contentious experience. Jazz attributes a great deal of her success to having taken a residential fellowship due to the advice of mentors. Although Jazz is eligible to go up for full professor next year, she has decided she will probably wait a few years. Jazz indicated that life has had some setbacks and that women should allow themselves time to grieve or rest when necessary and not feel guilty about needing to take that time. She indicated that the road to full professorship is not a race and that each person needs to take the time they need to get there. She noted that often Black females stay in associate rank for a long time because they are burned out from the process from assistant to associate.

**Kim Jones** -Associate Professor

“I do not know any other minority professors that made it to the tenure process in my field, I have not found one”.

I interviewed Kim Jones March 23, 2017 via video conferencing. Kim thought it was important that her voice be heard in this study. Kim has been at Drill A&M University for her entire tenure-track career. She earned her Ph.D. from DA&MU. Dr. Jones noted that she is the only Black female associate professor in her field that she is aware of. She indicated that it is not because they don't exist but due to them all leaving academia prior to achieving associate status. The tenure and promotion criteria were not provided to her however, she sought them out. She recalls receiving the department requirements from her department chair and the college and university requirements via the institutions web-page. Kim was not assigned a mentor however, she recognized how important it was for all junior faculty to know and understand the tenure requirements. Kim was prompted to start workshops which promoted sharing tenure and

promotion experiences, tips, and advice. While going through the promotion and tenure process, Kim Jones actively sought assistance from colleagues and was directly denied assistance.

**Maria-** Professor

“I love what I do and sometimes it's hard for me to balance the commitments that I have for the scholarship and teaching. I'm really committed to teaching and that's shown in the many awards that I get. Sometimes I think that's not as valued as it should be”.

I interviewed Maria on April 26, 2017 via videoconferencing. Maria was very open and ready to discuss her tenure experiences at Honors State University (HSU). Maria received both her bachelor's degree and master's degree from HSU. Prior to coming to HSU as an assistant professor, she worked at another university for three years and was advised to disregard previous research that she had done and to start fresh on the tenure-track at HSU. She earned associate professor in 2004 and full professor four years later in 2008. Maria's department had explicit requirements for obtaining tenure. When she arrived at the university, she was supplied with the requirements. The requirements were clear and her colleagues helped to mentor her through the process. Due to the excellent mentorship and clear understanding of promotion and tenure requirements, Maria had a unanimous vote when she went from assistant to associate professor. Maria noted that her department is very strategic in making sure that junior faculty are aware and prepared for the promotion and tenure process. If they do not believe that they will obtain tenure, they will not go up. HSU also has a third year review which gives a strong indicator to professors on their probability of obtaining tenure after three years.

Maria made a special point to meet with her department chair periodically to let him know that she was making progress towards tenure. She indicated that she received this advice from a colleague. In addition to making her chair aware of her progress toward tenure, Maria felt it was important to remind her colleagues of the difficulty of doing race work since much of her

work centers around race. Maria's department does not give many points for service and places greater emphasis on research in teaching. Since Black female professors are often heavily laden with service, it was important for Maria to realize that she could not give as much time to service and needed to concentrate her efforts on research and teaching. Although Maria was not specifically assigned a mentor, she had several mentors within her department and at universities who have been essential in her success.

**Marie Woods- Professor**

“It's still a situation that needs a lot of work when it comes to women of color on this campus. It's by no means equitable. Don't get that idea at all, they're still working on that one. Still working on it”.

I interviewed Marie on April 20, 2017 in person. Marie earned the rank of full professor in 2015. She has spent her entire tenure-track career at Pine Tree State University (PTSU). In addition, Marie earned both her bachelor and master's degree from PTSU. At PTSU, requirements are different across departments and there are no specific numbers of articles or books indicated. Marie is interdisciplinary which required extra effort on her part and that of the committee when she was being evaluated for tenure. For instance, music and films had to be sent to other departments and analyzed and then letters had to be written and sent back to her department concerning her work. Marie's department traditionally has three members on the promotion and tenure committee. Marie received a unanimous vote when she went up for tenure. However, she indicated that she had one nay when she went up for full. Although she did not have a unanimous vote, she felt that the process was fair. Marie noted that the process will probably always have some bias because you will always have someone who has their own idea about what the tenure process should be.



One issue that Marie Woods indicated within her department is that it is a joint department. Geographers usually research together which allows them to put out more articles per year whereas Anthropologists take longer time periods to collect data. This presents a problem because Geographers feel that Anthropologists should be producing articles at the rate that they do.

Marie had no formal mentorship at PTSU. However, she noted that now, junior faculty are assigned a mentor when they enter. She noted that they are at an advantage now whereas she had to seek advice from colleagues on what she needed for her dossier. Even with advice, the most challenging part is determining what to include and what not to include because you never know what they are going to look at.

#### **Umoja**-Associate Professor

“A lot of African American sisters in higher education are getting ready to retire. That support and that voice is leaving ‘cause folks are retiring and if we don’t replace it soon, it’s going to be problematic”.

I interviewed Umoja March 15, 2017 via video conferencing. Umoja was extremely enthusiastic about speaking with me on this topic. She had a fresh perspective as she had recently experienced a mentee not receiving tenure at her institution. Umoja was the only participant that indicated that the promotion and tenure process was the same across departments, colleges, and the university. In addition to having uniform requirements, the university offered workshops and trainings for faculty to attend throughout the process. Umoja took a nontraditional route to tenure. She spent three years at Traditional University. After three years, she moved to another highest/higher research activity institution because she wanted to live in a larger city. After being at this university for six years, she was denied tenure. Since she did not leave traditions on a bad note, she was welcomed back with the understanding that she would have to continue to

work towards tenure. Even with university wide requirements that were provided to her, Umoja indicated that some requirements were still vague. It used language such as “significant impact in the field”. Umoja noted that the requirements are more specific now and indicate exact numbers of articles required.

Of greatest concern to Umoja is that many Black female professors are nearing retirement. If those professors are not replenished with more Black female professors then the situation will become more dire than it is now. She noted that this is why mentorship is essential for BFPs. Umoja is a huge proponent of mentorship and collaboration with colleagues, She acknowledges the difference that it made in her career and her feeling of support at TU.

### **Thematic Analysis**

The stories began with the participants describing their tenure experiences as Black female professors at predominantly white institutions. While each participant had her own experience, they had a common thread that linked them together. In the interviews, the participants disclosed their challenges and victories as Black female professors at PWIs. The participants discussed the challenges of managing research, teaching, and service in addition to their other responsibilities at work. In addition, the participants gave advice to future Black female faculty in the hopes that they would be more informed and prepared than they may have been when they approached the tenure and promotion process. As previously referenced (Sule, 2008), the strategies given includes inherent strategies used by them to counter challenges presented by their external and extremely hostile environment and foster group survival while promoting structural transformation.

Overall, the Black female professors who participated in this study expressed a wide array of viewpoints on their experiences of the tenure and promotion process. Their perspectives

contributed a valuable insight into the lives and experiences of many Black female professors at public highest/higher research activity institutions. The challenges of being a tenured Black female professor, the intersectionality of being Black and female and the experiences with mentorship, to name a few, will be discussed in chapter four in addition to the other core themes that emerged from the interviews.

The online survey served to garner basic data on the characteristics represented by the participants allowing for a descriptive analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to garner the stories of each participant. The interview data was maintained solely by the researcher and maintained in a password protected electronic file. In order to analyze the data, the researcher identified emerging themes after analyzing the multitude of responses from each question.

This chapter identifies the emerging themes that surfaced while using the experiences of Black female professors (BFP) at select peer institutions to answer the three research questions. After the participant interviews were completed, transcription was completed by the researcher and a third party and verified for accuracy by the researcher. From the transcripts, notes taken by the researcher during the interview and the participant demographic surveys a preliminary thematic analysis was conducted. To determine the commonalities among the participants' experiences, the researcher read through the transcripts to get a feel of their stories. Repeated key words were highlighted making memos on initial thoughts and interpretation of the raw data. Part of the analytic process included identifying key phrases and clustering them in a group. The themes were developed from that cluster. Three themes emerged from the data.

1. “Barriers”-participants discussed the barriers that they faced as tenure-track professors at public highest/higher research activity institutions.

2. “Mentorship and Support”-The avenues of support or lack of support that participants experienced and why a support system is necessary.
3. “Lack of Respect”-participants discussed issues with colleagues and students and how research supports the fact that student evaluations of African American females is biased.

Table 3 provides a visual of the major themes identified along with supporting sub-themes.

Table 3  
Overview of Thematic Analysis

Major Theme	Sub-theme(s)
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ambiguity</li> <li>● Lack of Respect for Research</li> <li>● Overextension in the Academy</li> </ul>
Mentorship and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mentorship</li> <li>● Support is Essential</li> <li>● Mentor Others</li> </ul>
Lack of Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conflict with Colleagues</li> <li>● Disrespect by students</li> </ul>

### **Theme 1: Barriers**

*Barriers that participants faced as tenure-track professors at public highest/higher research activity predominantly white institutions*

The first major theme that surfaced was the barriers to tenure and promotion that emerged as the participants went through the process. Consistent with the research previously referenced (Tillman, 2004; Moore, Alexander and Lemelle, 2010; Weems, 2003) on the intersectionality between race and gender, facing consistent barriers is a common theme for Black women at public PWIs. Barriers include ambiguous requirements for tenure and promotion, challenging

and discrediting research and being overextended in the academy. Most of the participants shared similar experiences with the requirements for tenure and promotion being vague, unclear, and inconsistent across departments. Although uniformity across departments and colleges were present at one university, the participant conceded bias was still able to surface. Many participants experienced colleagues who were unhelpful during the tenure process even to the point of just refusing to assist them even when asked directly. In addition, many participants divulged experiences with extra classes, committees, and other duties that were not required of their colleagues and not accounted for when they were reviewed for tenure. The themes and sub-themes for this section answer research question number one: *What are the experiences of Black female professors at select public highest/higher research activity PWIs as they pursued tenure?* This theme had three sub-themes: *Ambiguity, Lack of Respect for Research and Overextension in the Academy.*

### **Ambiguity**

As previously referenced (Gregory, 1999), low rates of representation by Black female professors can be attributed to the difficulties faced by BFP in matriculating through the promotion and tenure process. Inconsistent and vague requirements were a common sub-theme amongst the participants that supports this research. In many cases within this study, the tenure and promotion requirements were not provided to the professors. Most often, they had to seek them out from the internet or department chairs and in a few cases they were provided by mentors. Often within colleges, the requirements would vary from department to department. Inconsistent and vague requirements added another barrier to overcome in the tenure and promotion process. The data received from the participants supports the literature previously referenced (Hurtado, 2008) which indicated that antiquated policies at PWIs largely favor white

male faculty over racial minorities and little effort occurs to bring about institutional change.

The American Association of University Professors (O'Meara, 2000) indicated that lack of effort contributed to ambiguity in guidelines surrounding tenure and promotion.

Each participant spoke of her experiences with the tenure and promotion process at her institution. Kim Jones explained the process she experienced in her department:

How my packet is reviewed is very subjective and vague. We don't have any type of rubric or formal evaluation

Ayanna was selected to be a member of the tenure and promotion committee for her college for three years. Being a part of this committee allowed Ayanna to see a different side of the tenure and promotion process. Ayanna's experiences allowed her to see the discrepancies in the requirements in her college:

For three years, I was on the tenure and promotion committee. I was the only African American for three years. I found out that even within the College of Arts and Sciences, there is no uniformity. I learned that there are some unwritten standards. There is an uneven playing field as far as the College of Arts and Sciences is concerned. You have people in the hard sciences-physics, math, biology, chemistry and then you have those of us on the humanities side in history, English, and foreign languages. It's like apples and oranges. Our department doesn't say, "okay, you must have five articles," or you must have two books by the time you go up for promotion tenure". It says as long as you have a steady progression in your publications.

Ayanna's observation while on the tenure and promotion committee indicated that in many instances, faculty members within one college are held to different standards based upon the department that they are housed in. In addition, she indicated that faculty within the sciences have a different view of what research is as compared to the faculty within the arts. However, the senior faculty in the sciences were the committee for the college when she went up for full professor. Ayanna discussed her experience:

In the College of Arts and Sciences, my colleagues, the three full professors voted in favor with two excellents and one satisfactory. My department chair there in my favor

excellent in all three categories. The four people from the College of Arts and Sciences, voted zero to four, non-promotion. A very terse letter that just indicated that they hadn't even read. How long did I tell you my dossier was? Ten three-ring binders...three inch, three ring binders. All three of my degrees are in English. Mainly, I helped to set up the African American studies at Drill A&M University. I teach in English. I teach in African American studies. I was appointed in 2015 by the then Provost to be the director of the first ever...a pioneering exchange program in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. So, I am wearing three hats. My two colleagues who are going up with me, one is in Medieval Lit and the other is in Modern Lit. They're doing one. I am doing three. Nonetheless, these four full professors voted unanimously non-promotion. I found out that their disciplines are math, physics, chemistry, and biology. There's not a single full professor of the arts on the arts and sciences tenure committee.

Ayanna's experience with the tenure and promotion committee indicated that during her initial application for promotion to full, she encountered a biased committee that contained members that are not familiar with her field of work. However, other women in her field were granted tenure without question. These women had less departmental and university responsibilities than Ayanna. In this instance, Ayanna was fortunate to have the support of her department chair.

Another area related to the inconsistency in requirements that must be considered is when some professors are awarded tenure with seemingly less and others are required to have twice as much to receive tenure. A.T. Simpson expressed her concern through her experience. She noted:

I had an award winning book and six to eight articles. A Black male colleague had three articles and one was an e-Journal and he received tenure. So, it's wishy washy in the way that they decide how you're going to get tenure. It depends on if you're a favorite person or not.

Jazz expressed similar concerns after witnessing a colleague that recently had not earned tenure. She noted that similar to Ayanna and A.T.'s experiences that requirements are not consistent and can change dramatically based up who your committee is comprised of. Jazz noted:

You get the wrong person on your committee and people who had less got tenure before people and people who had more didn't get tenure. Because it really is about the personality and how people read certain requirements. That happened to someone I know. Someone just recently got tenure who had less than someone I know that was denied tenure. I'm like did that person get tenure? They were in the same department. I was like, this makes no sense to me. The one that got tenure was a white woman and the one who didn't get tenure was not African American but she was a person of color. I was like, 'but I know what both of their files look like'. They didn't have the same committee but, they're in the same department. You need the right perspectives on these committees because it makes no sense that certain people are held to a higher standard. It seems like the target is always moving, right? So, when you come in, what you think you need may not be what the person thinks when you come up. You have this idea when you sign your contract. Then people are talking about other things that aren't really quantifiable.

Although Umoja is at a university which has a university wide standard for tenure and promotion, she indicated that there are still issues that can occur within the tenure and promotion process. Umoja discussed her experiences at Traditions University:

Our system is uniform across colleges and universities. We were given a handbook and lists and then there were workshops to say what the expectations for tenure and promotion were. There are a series of workshops for those people who are contemplating from associate to full. They have workshops so they can talk to you about it. When I went up, there was not a set number of articles and it wasn't clear where those articles should come from, but that has changed. They're very specific that if you don't have at least ten when you get ready to go up for associate, and if they're not in high impact journals, the likelihood is that you will not get it.

Although Umoja's university has uniform standards, she argued that the standards still allowed for subjectivity. The process does not take into account the unique struggles that professors from underserved populations encounter especially when their work focuses on gender and ethnicity.

Marie Woods' experiences were similar to the experiences as Ayanna. She also made note that what the department indicated was most important was not in fact the most valued.

Marie noted:

You really don't know a specific number of articles or a specific number of books or anything like that that you have to have. There's not a set number. Publications are number one. They say that teaching is but in reality, it's research.



Although Jazz had a fairly smooth tenure experience, she recognized the issues within her university as it related to the requirements for tenure and promotion. Jazz indicated:

Some departments have their own documents and some just go with what the college says. They'll say something like "a book plus". This plus is interpreted however. You know you have the book, but the plus, there's no stipulation as to what the plus is.

Maria's experience in her department were similar to that of Umoja in that the requirements are very specific therefore, Maria was aware from the outset on what was specifically required of her. When she entered her university, she was provided with a set of standards for requirements. Maria noted:

The tenure process in my department is different from others here at my institution. They're different because every discipline has different expectations and different modes of publishing and they have different standards in general. For my department, we have explicit guidelines that tell us how many publications a person should have in order to go up for tenure and promotion and to be at the rank of professor. When I arrived here at the university, I received those instructions. They were very clear, and my colleagues helped mentor me through that process. The department just does and did a really good job of making sure that faculty that went up for promotion would have a strong case. They wouldn't put up anybody that didn't have enough publications or their publications seemed a little bit shady or shaky. So, upon having the third year review, that is a solid marker for junior faculty. That helps them to know whether or not they are at a point where they can be promoted to full. If that person is not making progress then they will be advised to look for another job.

Unlike most other institutions, Jazz's university had a reappointment process at the fourth year, which was similar to the third year review at Maria's institution, which gave each professor an indication as to whether or not they were on track for tenure in the sixth year. If a professor was not reappointed in the fourth year, it was a good indication that they would not receive tenure and should seek employment somewhere else.

## **Summary**

Due to the vagueness and potential for subjectivity, most participants believed the tenure and promotion process to be fair but biased. It was considered fair because, in most cases, the

requirements were stated however it was biased due to the subjectivity of others involved in the tenure and promotion process. Ambiguity is a component of the theme Mammies, Matriarchs and other Controlling Images of Black Feminist Thought. Lack of consistency is a manner of controlling Black women in academia (Collins, 1991). Having inconsistent and vague requirements allows the Black female to be punished by expressions of racism and other biases through members of promotion and tenure committees. Inconsistencies allow Black women's continued oppression based on race and gender and universities often fail to recognize the subtle acts of racism and micro-aggressions that are experienced by Black female professors at PWIs (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, and Galindo, 2009).

The participants all agreed that the tenure process would benefit from reform. Upon reviewing the processes discussed by each participant, it was concluded that the processes needed to be reviewed by the universities. Many new professors may not be familiar with top-tier refereed journals or other requirements that are necessary for tenure. In addition, they may not know how to compile a dossier and this is something that they need to know from the beginning of their careers, in order to be fully prepared when they submit their dossier for tenure. It would also be helpful if universities had consistency across departments and colleges especially for those professors who are dually appointed. Although the vagueness of tenure requirements are not exclusive to Black female professors, many participants noted that it allowed for them to be held to a higher standard than others within the review process. This was supported by stories such as one colleague not receiving tenure with multiple referred journals and another receiving tenure with two articles and an e-Journal. The stories of the participants supports the claim of Womble (1995) and Burgess (1997) which indicated that a lack of explicit

and consistent guidelines stipulating tenure criteria compounds the challenges experienced by women of color in the academy.

### **Lack of respect for research**

Another sub-theme that emerged in the research was a lack of respect for the participant's research. Lack of respect for the participant's research is a barrier because it called into question the validity or necessity of the professor's work. This created a direct problem during tenure when committee members did not value work. In addition, barriers were created when participants submitted articles for publishing and they were not published because their work was not seen as valuable by evaluators. A major component of the tenure and promotion process is analyzing the work of professors. Having to prove oneself as a Black person and as a woman is yet another challenge faced by Black female professors as previously referenced in (Evans, 2007). Many participants discussed the belief that their research was often undervalued or misunderstood by their colleagues when undergoing the tenure and promotion process. The participants all expressed that they wanted their research to make an impact and contribution to society. Essentially, the main request was for their research to be judged on its merit and quality instead of by their gender and ethnicity. Many of the participants had research that dealt with race issues or history. Collins (2000) noted:

Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of dominant groups (p.vii).

Marie Woods is a very unique professor because her research spans several different departments. She gave an example of how her work may not have received its proper recognition when a committee was not sure of how to judge or categorize it. Marie Woods stated:

I'm interdisciplinary. I submitted my dossier for an award and I got second place because they say they didn't know where to put me because I was so interdisciplinary. They gave someone else first place and put me second place. Said my work was good, but they just wasn't quite sure what category to put me in.

Incidents such as this shed light on the fact that often times those that are judging the dossiers of others may not have the skill set to objectively judge their dossiers. Having the rank of full professor does not guarantee that a professor knows or even understands the work of those outside of their discipline.

Umoja had recently experienced a colleague not receiving tenure. Her main concern was that this colleague's work was not understood. Requests had been made for the colleague to adjust her work to conform to the status quo however, she did not feel that her work should be compromised. Umoja shared:

The research one process says, 'your work will speak for itself'. You do the work and of course, you are going to be here. Well, if you don't know my work, and if you don't understand my work, and if my work is not picked up in what you perceive to be level one-tier one journals but it is picked up because it is growing, the momentum is there, but it might be in a book chapter. She would submit her work to one of these high-impact journals and they would say 'well, you know this is very interesting but what about including Latinos? What about comparing them to white folks? That's not what she wanted to do. So that would mean we would have to change our whole protocol to do that because this is not something that we are interested in at this time. So, this is not a matter of someone saying, 'your work is not quality'. It is 'I don't see your work fitting into what I do'.

Umoja's concern is that academia is losing and will continue to lose dynamic scholars that can add to the university if the tenure and promotion committees cannot understand and

value the contributions that they are making to their field. Just because a person's work is not understood, does not mean that it is not relevant or important. Asking a person to change the data set for their work, no longer makes the work relevant to them. However, many professors that do race work have to change their studies if they want their work to be published.

Jazz noted another area of concern as it relates to research. She indicated that the process is much more challenging now. Portfolio requirements needed for tenure 20-30 years ago are not half of what professors are required to have today. She stated:

There's more emphasis on bean counting, numbers, and all this. There seems to be an emphasis on things that were not necessarily required when I was coming up. I will say this and I think that the studies will bear this out, that the more diversified the academy has become, and we still have a long way to go, the harder the requirements. When you talk to older colleagues who were hired 40, 50 years ago and they tell you that they basically didn't have anything done when they got their job and they got promoted on basically half of what you did, it's disheartening. Which explains why the academy looks like what it looks like. Because they didn't have the same rigorous requirements. So, I think it's interesting how the more you have underrepresented groups in the academy, it seems like the harder it is to achieve tenure and promotion. I don't believe in conspiracies, but I think there was this sense that, 'Oh, we have to make sure that everyone is meeting this standard'. There's this idea that somehow we got into the academy through political action as opposed to the work that we do and the impact we have on the field. I feel like people look askance at us like, 'I don't know'. Then it's these kind of things like, 'well, you know, they are really more interested in service' or 'you know they're really not interested in a robust research agenda'.

As previously stated, when professors go up for tenure, the process becomes extremely subjective based upon the members of the tenure and promotion committee. Committee members often base their decision on their experiences with research. Many participants felt that they were held to a higher standard than their colleagues because their area was not understood. Maria Woods spoke of her experiences within her college.

Going into the tenure process. Especially as I said before, this is a joint department and some of the anthropologists have a hard time getting through to the geographers. We have more geography professors than anthropology professors. They have another system but many of them will do joint publications. You've got three and four people on this one article so that means you can almost put out three or four a year if you're just going to

write three, four pages as one article. Many of them may have four or five publications to our one but they're holding us up to their standards. Not that ours aren't high but we don't normally do a lot of joint publications. Plus we're in the field interviewing people and I'm talking about the culture anthropologist and it might take us two, three years to get one good journal article, a scholarly journal because we're doing field work. We constantly have to do this argument all the time. Remind them that these are different fields.

Marie added:

You have to know the strengths and weaknesses of the journals and you have to be able to build a case for why you published in this particular journal. You have to defend it in your state...you have a statement. I had about, I don't know, it might have been a four or five page statement. I had a statement and then I had a statement for each area. That's it, you have to do all your defense in that statement.

In addition to being held to the standards of the committee, often, quantitative researchers do not value the work of qualitative researchers. Umoja gave her opinion on the subject:

Some folks can run around, and they do all this so-called wonderful research. They send out a bunch of surveys and people just check off the survey and I can use my multiple regression blah, blah, blah. Wonderful! But, what difference has it made in anybody's community? I may be a little bit biased but I'm saying in comparison to those people who are talking to individuals, for those individuals, who are doing groundbreaking work. Somebody's got to be willing to value that, to give that young professor the opportunity to pursue that.

Umoja's thoughts highlight the issues that many qualitative researchers face when evaluated by quantitative researchers regardless of their race or gender.

## **Summary**

Black Feminist Thought consists of analyzing Black women's work (Collins, 1991). The professors all realize that their work will be analyzed and reviewed however, they want their work to be valued. Valuing their work does not mean that one must agree with it but it is acknowledging that it is important work and that it is needed in the academy. In most instances, colleagues did not acknowledge the necessity for their work. Maria noted that she conversed with her colleagues regularly concerning her work to make sure that they understood the value

and the necessity. As previously referenced, (Turner & Myers, 2000) indicated that research carried out by Black faculty members are known to be devalued or ignored if the subject of the research deals with minority concerns since such topics are not considered mainstream.

### **Overextension in the Academy**

The third sub-theme of barriers is overextension in the academy. Overextension is a barrier because it prevented the participants from concentrating on the most valued component of the tenure and promotion process-research. Often as African American women in the academy, the participants spoke of being pulled in multiple directions. Sometimes, the participants were assigned extra duties that they were not compensated for or had more or larger classes than their peers. Overextension in the workplace is a concept that relates to the theme of Work, Family, and Black Women's Oppression in Black Feminist Thought as Black women are victimized in the labor marketplace and considered mules (Collins, 1991). General patterns of race and gender equality is evident in that participants spoke of being on multiple committees as the Black and/or female representative in addition to sponsors and advisors for many students and groups of color. These duties were not expected or required of their white male and often white female colleagues. In addition, they were solicited in the community for service work. This work took away from their opportunity to complete their research. Although, they were highly aware of the importance of their research, the professors believed that community work was also necessary. Many expressed the need to learn to say no, however, they felt that they were needed and it was hard to say no. These feelings support the theme of The Power of Self-Definition in BFT. Black women in their desire to help others in the community participate in their own oppression by choosing to participate in community service instead of focusing on research. This occurs when

their research agenda is jeopardized by community service and fashioning themselves as the historical Black female role models in the community (Collins, 1991). Kim Jones discussed her experience with extra duties during her tenure process:

During my tenure process, I was required to teach extra classes. As far as just teaching here we have what we call a two three load and during my promotion and tenure process I was required to teach extra classes so that's what two and three means that you teach two classes one semester and three another semester. That leaves each class is considered like a quarter time so while I'm teaching two classes then I should have 60% to do service and/ or scholarly research whereas the next semester where I have three, the three that leaves you with 25% time. During my promotion and tenure process there were times when I had to teach extra classes... that wasn't always something that was required of other people of the same level. I'm offered a program where this extra teaching duties beyond your classes that doesn't always account for that time. I'm in a doctoral upper level class so I have a lot of advising when it comes to writing dissertations and things such as that nature.

Kim was required to teach extra classes in addition to what was the normal requirement. Her duties also included being an advisor on several dissertation committees. In addition she is a clinical director which requires lots of clinical hours. None of these extra duties were factored in when reviewing her dossier for tenure. Often, professors are given duties that takes time away from research. Ayanna noted her experience with being pulled in multiple directions:

We get asked to be on these committees for diversity and then, the students come to us when they're mistreated by white professors and then, I also volunteer to be on certain committees because I want to make sure that African Americans are treated as they should be. There are a number of committees where you are the only one. It just gets so heavily layered with all of these various things. I feel that as an African American professional. I need to do these.

Jazz spoke of her experiences with being pulled in different directions. She noted that often it is hard to say no especially when you see that someone is in need of your assistance. However, saying yes to too many projects can affect your time for research. Jazz implied that there is a level of expectation for professors to serve on multiple committees at the university



level as well as provide service to the community for tenure and promotion. This adds to the feeling of being stretched too thinly. Jazz stated:

I think the greatest issue is being pulled in different directions because you think, 'oh, I'm going to get tenure and then I don't have to do all this stuff'. But then actually, you need to be on this committee, you need to be on that committee. There's an expectation. But then you are also pulled in your community, however your affiliations go. These are important affiliations for me. So, I think a lot of it has to do with you just being pulled in various directions. We can't turn a blind eye, you know what I mean? To things happening right outside our backyard. We're often in the midst of these struggles on campuses and our communities. The majority of the people on campus are not engaged in that field of activism. It's easier said than done to say no. People tell you just say no and it's easier said than done. When Johnny says no, okay, he says no. If I say no, you're not playing ball and you're not a team player. This person will let you know from day one, 'I'm not doing nothing'. Y'all co-sign that shit and then when somebody else say, 'Why don't you want to do it?' Then it becomes all personal. What? No. So, I just keep it real like that. That's all I got to say on that. I think it's being pulled in different directions and I have to say, we need support. I will say this. I think that again, our situations are different. I'm sick of people talking to me about equality instead of equity. I need you to stop.

Marie Woods shared that she had to re-evaluate the number of committees that she committed to because she was overextending herself. Ultimately, she decided that she needed to red flag emails and come back to them after thinking about it for a few days. She contributed the following in regards to being pulled in multiple directions:

It's the thing about service again where everybody is asking you to serve on these committees particularly outside of the department. It's just...I literally had to tell people no because it was just...if I wasn't in class, it looked like I was in a meeting. I listed it one time. I listed on...because we do annual reports too. I listed on my annual report. It was about 10 committees between my department, the university, and the college. I started writing them all down, and not that you go to all of them on a regular basis, but I said...this is too much. I just started removing myself off of them and trying not to get on any now. Unless I feel that it's really, really important.

## **Summary**

For centuries, Black women have felt a sense of responsibility in uplifting the community and providing assistance to others. Often, the participants were overextended because they were extremely active within the community and found it hard to say no to students and community

members when they genuinely needed their help and guidance. However, most of the overextension can be contributed to extra duties that were placed on these women for being black. The treatment experienced by the BFP supports the literature previously referenced (Gregory, 1999; Aquirre, 2000) which indicated that minority faculty members are more stressed than their white male counterparts which results in missed opportunities or failure to fulfill requirements which make them eligible for tenure.

## **Theme 2: Mentorship and Support**

*Mentorship is necessary in academia especially for Black female professors*

The second major theme that surfaced was the need for support in the academy. Black feminist have suggested that sustained relationships with other Black women are essential to the social and psychological well-being of Black women (Hughes & Howard Hamilton, 2003). Gregory (2001) makes specific reference to Black women connecting with mentors within their academic discipline, establishing a supportive network of colleagues within their departments and outside of their departments. Most participants were not assigned a mentor when they entered the academy. Many sought out their own mentors. All of the participants acknowledged that some type of support was needed whether it was a formal mentor relationship, organically developed relationships or friends and family. Mentorship allowed participants to feel more supported throughout the tenure process. Those participants that did not have mentors expressed a more difficult or isolating experience. Participants acknowledge that negative relationships caused setbacks in the tenure process. The themes and sub-themes for this section answer research question three: What role has mentorship played in your experiences in academia? This theme was encompassed by the following sub-themes: *Mentorship*, *Support is Essential*, and *Mentor Others*.

## **Mentorship**

For those participants that had mentors, it was a positive experience. For African American women, mentoring, peer mentoring or some type of formal mentoring process is a necessity. Often Black female professors are the only faculty of color within their departments and in many cases even though they may have received the requirements, they are not familiar with the steps to get to tenure. Therefore, going through the process is more difficult for them especially without the support and mentoring of colleagues. Although same ethnicity mentorship is favored in many cases, it is sometimes impossible to have a mentor that has the same ethnicity because of the lack of diversity on campus. Participants have had success with mentors regardless of their ethnicity or gender. Madsen (2007) noted that a supportive relationship was essential no matter what race or ethnicity. Ayanna talked about her experience with the mentorship at her institution: Initially, she was assigned a mentor at her university who was a white male. They had a good working relationship. Her mentor suggested that she increase her publications and decrease her service. After her mentor retired, Ayanna was on her own to figure things out. Her mentor retired before she went up for tenure. Ayanna discussed her experience:

When I came here, I was assigned a mentor. I came here in 2005 and he was a white male. He suggested to me early on, when I came up for a third year review. He saw that my dossier was heavily laden with service and...which as African Americans, that's another layer of this whole process. I said, 'oh yeah, I know it's heavily laden with service but some of these things, I feel a duty down to do. But, I hear what you're saying, I will work on my publications more'. It might have been he that gave me the guideline for PNT. After about five years in the department, my mentor retired and moved away. I was pretty much on my own from that point on.

Jazz did not have a mentor assigned to her but expressed her experiences with mentorship at her institution and why she believes mentorship is essential. She presented with very strong feelings on the topic. She indicated that some departments at her university assigned mentors but her department did not. Jazz had to seek out her own mentor which is often the case for many

Black female professors since there is a lack of available Black women within their institutions. She felt that mentorship is a critical component and without the proper dissemination of key information, those unfamiliar with the tenure and promotion process are at a disadvantage. Professors, especially Black females, do not know the nuances like fellowships and recommendation letters that are required for the dossier. Jazz stated:

There are people who have mentors. I have to seek out my mentor. It's kind of sad because it's 2017 and you think there would be more robust mentorship. I think that's one of the conversations we're definitely having is about we need more mentors. We need people who have gone through the process to officially mentor us. Not on the sidelines. This is critical because we do not know how to navigate this world. Some of us, we learn, and we learn because we had robust mentorship, but not everybody's the same. No one shoe fits everybody. I think that when you look at places where you have this bottleneck of African-American women not even getting tenure because there were people before us, they didn't get tenure. It's about mentorship. We're trying to do our own work. We get that. But, we also need mentorship. How do I know? I've never been in this process. How do I know that I need to actually write this person and ask this person to do X, Y, and...how do I know this? How do I know I should be looking for fellowships? It was someone outside my university. I would not have known that if someone had not told me it.

A.T. Simpson was another participant who was not assigned a mentor. Due to negative experiences with faculty and department chairs, A.T. did not believe that any mentorship would be helpful at her university. She did not receive nor was she offered mentorship at her university. A.T.'s observation has been that if you are not in a supportive environment, you are more inclined to leave the university or academia altogether. She indicated that a tenured Black female professor left academia altogether after her experiences at Love Life University. She further indicated that many other women have just chosen to leave academia due to lack of mentorship and support and feelings of isolation. In her case, A.T. did not think that mentorship would have made a difference. She stated:

I had no mentorship. I was not assigned a mentor and I was not mentored. I think that the chair of my department decided he was going to fuck me up and I think that whoever they had...no. I think that if you're in an environment where the folks are decent and are

committed to you, yeah, it would be a good thing but what I think is that these PWIs don't want black women there and they make it hard for you to stay there. We had one woman at Love Life that quit with tenure. I've met many other Black women who have had difficulty trying to go through the tenure process and left the academy.

Kim Jones was not assigned a mentor at her university. Kim thought it was important to have a mentor especially since she does not know of any Black females with tenure in her field. This is a problem for many Black females in fields that are not populated with Black women. In Kim's case, it would be difficult or nearly impossible to have a mentor that looked like her and understood her field of study. At her university, two African American females left academia before going through the tenure process. She stated:

I didn't have a mentor. I've asked my chair several times at least I know for three years, 'please give me someone to mentor me, please give me a name of someone that I could go and talk to about this process'. It's always I'll get back to you with a name. One time my chair told me I should get someone of equal status or less to help mentor me and I told him that was inappropriate.

Marie Woods did not have a mentor either however, she recognized the importance of a mentorship relationship. There was a white male faculty member who was assigned to mentor Marie however, he had little to no interaction with her. Marie was hired at the same time as a black male colleague and they supported each other for about two years until his untimely death. Marie Woods noted that new professors at her university are assigned mentors now as they come in and she recognizes how beneficial it is. The mentors help to guide them through the promotion and tenure process which makes a huge difference. She spoke of her experiences with mentorship:

I didn't have a mentor. I think it's wonderful now because a lot of them do have mentors but I didn't get one. When I came in it was like fend for yourself honey, we brought you in now, you're in. It was really, really hard. Because during that time, I'm talking about late 80s early 90s, some of these guys around me didn't even know how speak to me because they were only used to just having a Black secretary... I don't know if the person in that department who was the one that would have mentored me if he just didn't know how to deal with a Black woman or I don't know if it was a gender or racial thing. It may

not have been either one but he never reached out at all the entire time. I just had to figure out stuff for myself.

Maria had a positive experience with mentorship even though she was not specifically assigned a mentor. She sought out mentors and felt they played an integral role in her experience with promotion and tenure. She expressed that a good mentorship relationship really assisted the mentee in understanding the promotion and tenure process and normalizing it. In addition, having a sounding board in the process that was well versed helped to keep her grounded. Maria further noted that she had more than one mentor and they are both male and female and on and off campus. This variety of mentor/mentee relationships allows her to have a wealth of background experiences. Each mentor serves a different purpose. Maria felt that self-selected mentors were more beneficial for her because the relationships were more organic and had the interests of both involved in mind. She stated:

It played an excellent role. Without it, you absolutely might lose your mind. You need someone with guidance to help you get through those walls, if you feel like you're not publishing like you want to. They could also give me, not necessarily warnings, but they can give me a heads up, like, "Don't mess with this person, don't do this, don't do that. Oh, you want to make sure that you do X, Y, and Z." One of my colleagues is an older white female and I call her my mentor. She's like, "I'm not your mentor. We're colleagues." I'm, "Nope, you're my mentor. You're going to be my mentor forever." She's always looked out for me and has given me advice about everything.

Umoja spent thirteen years as an assistant professor. She spent three years at her current institution and returned six years later after being denied tenure at another highest/higher research activity institution. Umoja divulged that she did not receive mentorship at the other institution but discussed the role that mentorship played at TU:

Mentorship was everything in my pursuit of tenure and that was because I was blessed to be mentored by...I have five, very, very significant African American people in my life. One male and four women. One African American male, four African American females, and the four of them have been with me from the beginning of this journey. Without this mentorship, I would not be where I am today. Would not be. And, it is

specifically because of their African American mentorship of me. People who look like me and people who have the same research interests as me. It has been paramount.

Umoja had strong opinions about the role that mentorship played in her life as well as the importance of having mentors that looked like her.

### **Summary**

Although most of the participants were not assigned a mentor, they recognized the importance of mentorship relationships. As previously referenced (Stanley, 2006, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 2004) , mentorship is known to be highly effective in success through the tenure process for Black females at predominantly white institutions. Since mentorship has been acknowledged as a positive influence on the tenure and promotion process, departments should make it a priority to assign mentors to junior faculty. If individual mentors cannot be assigned, regular trainings should be implemented for junior faculty to help familiarize them with the tenure process. In addition, a time period should be allotted for junior faculty to see submitted dossiers of those going up for tenure in their departments to familiarize themselves with the process. In addition, trainings should be offered at a variety of times during the academic year as not to interfere with teaching or other responsibilities. Adopting these practices would be beneficial to all junior faculty regardless of race or gender and would help to equalize the playing field for all faculty involved.

### **Support is Essential**

Consistent with the theme of Black Feminist Thought, as previously referenced, Collins (2000) indicated that Black females foster group survival to counter challenges faced such as forced isolation in predominantly white institutions. Having a support system is an essential component of the tenure and promotion process for Black female faculty at public PWIs. However, it illuminates the fact that BFP who did not receive appropriate mentorship often left

the academy due to feelings of isolation. Although most participants did not have assigned mentors, often, they sought them out. In addition to mentors, participants discussed the importance of support systems and advocates. Since the tenure and promotion process can be lonely and isolating, it is necessary to have people who are rooting for your success. In addition to supportive relationships with peers and colleagues, support from within the university system can also be essential in helping to have a successful experience with promotion and tenure.

Umoja is at a university that has consistent requirements throughout the university. In addition to consistent requirements (each assistant professor must have ten published articles in peer referred journals to be promoted to associate professor), trainings are offered for junior faculty as well as for associate professors who are working towards full professorship. Umoja spoke of the sources of support at her university throughout the tenure and promotion process.

The sources of support from the time that I entered were mentorship and college and university programs for support. Those sources at the university, those programs and those meetings. My present PWI is adamant about the programs and the resources to provide one support in the tenure and promotion process. So those programs and those settings to talk about tenure and promotion, they're very, very consistent at. The university provides those programs, and so in that sense they're very, they're very fair because the same information goes to everyone. Where they fall short, I believe, is in the context of what that means. I just want to see my university and other universities do a better job of bringing that mentorship and that literature together in that tenure and promotion process so that it can be more contextualized.

In addition to mentors, trainings, and advocates, Umoja also realized that sometimes it was as simple as having someone at the table that would speak for you in the event that it was necessary. Umoja noted that bias can be positive or negative. She had some negative biases on her promotion and tenure committee but she also had positive biases. Luckily, the positive biases were able to sway and outnumber the negative biases in her situation. For others, this may not be the case and it can make a difference in the promotion and tenure process. She stated:



I don't feel that it was unbiased. I think it was biased because I believe that the reason I got through is because certain people advocated for me. So there was bias against and bias for. Someone was there to contextualize it for them because they knew other people didn't understand what I was doing. So somebody needed to be at the table to give that context.

Maria had many mentors on campus but in addition to mentors on campus, she was fortunate enough to have family and friends that supported her in her endeavors. In addition to family and friends, Maria expressed how her faith helped her through the process. Maria noted:

My family, my friends, and something that has gotten me through, for sure, without a doubt, is my faith. It's having that relationship with God. Some people might think it's weird, but I honestly don't care, or they might not agree, but just praying, and the Holy Spirit showing me what I need to do to get to where I need to be. Sometimes I don't know where that is, but he shows me.

Participants noted that support could be as simple as someone speaking up on your behalf in a meeting or checking on you to see if you need anything or a colleague offering help of any manner. Ayanna was a cancer survivor that had just went through a divorce after a 30 plus year marriage. Ayanna divulged:

All those years, through 25 almost 30 years, I was an instructor. When I came to DA&MU in 2005, was my first year teaching as an assistant professor. I found out, I couldn't use any of that towards my promotion and tenure. It's like 25 years I wasn't even on the Earth. So that was a huge disappointment which meant that I had to work doubly hard to get to the point where I am now because I was competing with 20 and 30 somethings, doing three times more work. I had one of the fairest department chairs, bar none, that I had in my career. He was solicitous of my health. He was very supportive of my scholarship. Whenever I got an abstract accepted at a conference to the extent that funds were available, he helped with that. He was always giving accolades to those who had done something that was ... this was across the department to those who had accomplished something.

Kim Jones noted the importance of having a supportive network especially when working in a field that is not very diverse. She realized that sometimes you will have to go outside of your department or even your university to get the support that you may need. However, before accepting a position, professors should try to determine if the environment will be a good fit. If

an applicant does not feel like they will be supported within a department, it is best not to accept the position.

Find your mentor early. If it's on campus, if it's close to your department or your college...for you to find a mentor as close to your line of study as you can. If that's not available for you then I would encourage them to find a mentor outside of the university. If they could have both that would be great. That would be one thing that I would say, actually find someone. It doesn't always have to be another African American female. I would also ask them, if they're taking a position, is to really get to know their department chair to make sure they're going to be supportive of them. If they do face some of these barriers that that's going to be a person that's going to actually advocate for them or to make sure that if something does happen that they could kind of minimize some of those challenges.

## **Summary**

The presence of social support in addition to formal or informal mentorship are key components the participants have pointed out in what efforts were helpful in there obtaining tenure at their university as evident in the literature surrounding BFP. Social support does not have to be a formal program for it to be beneficial and effective. Often, just knowing that they had someone to lean on, hear them out, and offer advice was enough to help them to get through the process.

## **Mentor Others**

Black female faculty at public PWIs indicated the need to assist in the plight of their colleagues. Acknowledging that mentorship and support is needed throughout the tenure and promotion process lead the participants to recognize the essentiality of supporting others. All of the participants acknowledged that they made special efforts to be a support to others especially to other Black female professors. Although Kim Jones did not receive mentorship on her campus, she made special efforts to reach out to others at her university to provide a support system. Kim makes an effort to reach out to Black female professors on campus even if just to say hello so that they know she is there and available. Her department recently hired two new

Black females and she has reached out to them to let them know that she is there to offer a helping hand. Kim noted:

I absolutely think that mentorship is a critical component of the promotion and tenure process. Basically when that became a big issue for me not only on campus but in my field of study, then I started an initiative through our faculty council which is the voice of our college. I've been really active in getting people in, to come in and talk about general experiences as far as some of the hard core what does this mean in the promotion and tenure document. On the personal level I am always trying to connect with other African American female assistant professors here on campus. Of course it's based on if they're receptive to that but I try to actively reach out to people and explain things as much as I can.

Marie Woods makes a special effort to reach out to new professors. Since she was raised in the city where she works, she understands that she may have supports in place that some colleagues who are new to the area do not. When people move to a new city, it is often hard to get acclimated and it can be a lonely experience. Having someone to connect with can be comforting. She indicated:

I grew up in this city. I think about the people that come here and are not from here. I always try to reach out particularly if it's a black woman. I try to reach out and say, 'hi, well let's do lunch'. You're lonely here and nobody is helping you. Incidents happen and sometimes you don't talk about it and you hold, suppress all that with students, faculty, whatever.

Maria tries to reach out to other colleagues as well. She understand the importance of having a support system and being a support system as much as possible. Recently, a peer from another institution expressed that she considered her to be a mentor and valued everything that she has done to assist her. No matter if it was advice, reminders, checking in or just being an example of what could be accomplished in the field, it is helpful to others. Maria noted:

I've served as a mentor to colleagues, undergraduate students, graduate students, even colleagues at other institutions. I don't ever formally refer to myself as somebody's mentor. I essentially always just tell people, 'if I can do anything for you to help you, please let me know'. People have different definitions of mentors. Even if you don't mentor someone in the traditional sense, people see that if you give them advice in some kind of way, whether it's formal or informal, or you serve as a, I don't want to say living

testament, but as evidence that they can survive and succeed as well, then that seems to inform people's definitions of what it means to mentor, and be mentored.

Umoja is a strong supporter of mentorship and advocates since she had such a positive experience with her mentors and advocates. She understands the vital role that mentorship played in her life and wants to extend that courtesy to others. Umoja stated:

I've been a mentor to three African American females across my time back here at TU, two of them were successful, in their going up. One was not. I've been a mentor for individuals at other universities as a part of some of the professional development, for some of the professional organizations that I belong to.

Umoja also indicated that she has offered her support to others but it was not received well. These professors did not feel they needed feel they were in need of her or anyone else's assistance.

I don't agree. I don't agree but I embrace the reality that everybody gets to make their own decisions, and I often say, 'I'll be here when you need me, baby. I'll be here when you need me'.

Umoja further noted that some people in those situations just don't know what they need. However, she has learned that those relationships with like-minded people are very necessary to survival in higher education.

It's hard to hold people accountable for what they don't know. And you don't know what you don't know, and we have to get people to help you realize sometimes what you don't know 'cause you don't know.

Umoja felt it was always important to extend oneself to other Black female faculty even if they decided that they did not want the help.

## **Conclusion**

Whether the participants had mentorship or not, they believed that it was important that they extend themselves to others to offer assistance. In one of the core themes of Black Feminist thought, *The Power of Self-Definition*, Collins (1991) noted that Black women's efforts to find a

voice have occurred in at least three safe spaces. One location involves Black women's relationships with one another. Black women as sisters and friends affirm one another's humanity, specialness, and right to exist. Mentorship and advocacy is an important component of working in academia because it creates a sense of camaraderie that allows Black women to feel a level of comfort that they might not feel otherwise. Black women were traditionally brought up to see their education as something gained not just for their own development but for the purpose of race uplift (Collins, 1991). Today, many Black women still feel an obligation to help other Black women and Black communities in what is described as the struggle for group survival.

### **Theme 3: Lack of Respect (R.E.S.P.E.C.T)**

#### *Black Female Professors deserve the respect of colleagues and students*

Having experienced tensions with the promotion and tenure process, and lack of mentorship, Black women in the study spoke of the general disrespect they sometimes encountered with their colleagues and students within their departments, colleges and universities. When these incidents occurred, the participants felt further isolated and in many cases attacked. In addition to divisive issues with colleagues, many participants experienced disrespectful incidents with students. Although these incidents were infrequent, they reminded the professors that some students questioned their authority based on their race and/or gender. The theme for this section is *Lack of Respect*. This theme focused on research question one: What are the experiences of Black female professors at select public highest/higher research activity PWIs as they pursued tenure? The sub-themes are: *Conflict with Colleagues and Disrespect by students*.

#### **Conflict with Colleagues**

As previously referenced, Thomas & Hollenshead's, (2001) study of Black female professors reported lack of respect from colleagues, organizational barriers, unfriendly, and non-collegial attitudes. Participants spoke of issues they experienced with colleagues. In many cases they experienced microaggressions (verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.) (Sue, 2010) and in some cases more flagrant behavior. Colleagues treated Black professors as inferior or made them feel insignificant as faculty members. When faced with exclusion, maintaining the resilience to look beyond the situation and develop relationships with individuals who care becomes a necessity. Participants noted that these could not always be pinpointed as race related but often caused divisiveness and mistrust within the unit.

In an attempt to show collegiality, Umoja worked collaboratively with other BFP at her institution. They agreed to a 33.3% split amongst the three authors however, her colleague went up for tenure the year before she did and did not abide by the agreement and claimed a higher percentage for herself. As a result of this, the following year when Umoja went up for tenure, it appeared that she was exaggerating her contributions to the publications. Ultimately, the relationship with her colleague became strained due to the tenure and promotion process. The two were pitted against each other which ultimately led to the breakdown of their relationship, Umoja not receiving tenure and her eventual departure from the university.

Umoja spoke of her experience with this Black female professor at her previous institution. She stated:

It really was a matter that individuals pitted black folk against black folk and then I was the one left looking like I was padding my vita 'cause we were working together. So the venom had been implanted, okay? So, then they used the excuse, the tenure and promotion committee, is that your department didn't vote for you, and I really can't usurp

the department because while you do have some scholarship, we don't think you've done enough. And I'm like, 'Okay'.

For A.T. Simpson, the conflict with faculty came from being led to believe that her teaching evaluations were sub-par. As a result of being lied to about her ratings in comparison to others in the department, A.T. Simpson took additional courses at the collegiate level to increase her competencies in classroom teaching. Additionally, she organized a research group of graduate students in response to being told that she did not have enough graduate student committees. A.T. dedicated so much time and effort into improving skills that did not need improving that her time for research suffered. It was not until A.T. served on a committee herself that she realized her scores were as good as, but in most instances better than her white male counterparts. A.T. divulged:

I was lied to about my teaching. I received very good teaching evaluations, but I was lied to about that and I only found that out when I was on the tenure and promotion (committee). I saw that the white people and the others were getting low teaching evaluations, too, then I realized that, I knew he didn't like me, but then I realized that I had been being lied to about that.

Maria discussed a contentious relationship that she encountered with a faculty member. Maria had an encounter with a colleague that received full professorship as a result of a contract negotiation when she started at Honors State University.

I had been a full professor for several years, and I'm younger than her too. I don't know why I add that in, but I think that might have been a dig at her. Anyway, so when she came in, she was a full professor, but she is also a bully. She bullies everyone.

Although Maria found the individual to be a bully, it was not solely directed towards her. She took particular interest in challenging her however, her colleague was rude to most faculty members.

She would say things, at our national conference, or in different settings, that conveyed to other people that she definitely is racist. I don't know if a woman can be sexist, but she

definitely is sexist, but tries to present herself publicly as someone who is a mentor to other women, and that is not how it is at all.

Maria perceived that her colleague was a sexist and a racist. In addition, she was passive aggressive. She used ambush tactics to handle conflicts. In one particular instance, Maria asked to be nominated for a teaching award and needed references. She asked the bully.

I asked to be nominated for this award, she emailed me and said, 'swing by and chat'. Once I got there, she had a stack of papers, and laid them all out, and again, this is for a teaching award, and she was pretty much saying that I did not have the, whatever she thought the criteria were, she said I did not consistently rank in the top five for teaching. Therefore, she was not supportive of me winning this award.

Maria refuted every point that her colleague tried to use against her. As a result, she recused herself from the nomination process. It was left up to the nominating committee within the department and they nominated her without objection. Only five people a year are selected for this award at Courtesy State.

A few months later, I was contacted by the chair of the committee, or somebody and I think they told me to call them. I did, and they told me that I was one of the five recipients that year. I was like, "Praise God." Of course, I went straight to her office, and I was like, "Guess what, I ..." and she was like, "Oh my gosh." Gave me a hug and stuff. I was like, "Girl, I know you're fake, I just wanted you to hear it directly from me that I got this award."

Maria's experience further supports the idea that not all faculty are equipped to judge colleagues objectively as it pertains to their work.

## **Summary**

Black female professors unfortunately encounter discord with their colleagues. Aguirre (2000) indicated that women of color encounter more barriers to professional socialization and success in the academic workplace than do their White female counterparts. Marginalization often results in feelings of isolation. Lack of respect was a feeling expressed by the participants who had undesirable experiences with colleagues. Historically, Black women have experienced



microaggressions in the workplace in several fields of work. The goal of many colleagues in causing conflict with their colleagues was to make them doubt their self-worth and question their abilities as faculty members. As previously referenced (Frazier, 2011) indicated that academic bullying causes BFP to wonder if their hard work may never result in tenure from an unsupportive school. Barriers that are constructed to dehumanize BFP not only challenges the Black female but it constricts their progress in academia. The participants in this study were able to persist despite their encounters with conflict however, in many instances these are the types of experiences that have caused other faculty to leave academia.

### **Disrespect by students**

Littleford, et. al. (2010) addressed the issues of Black professors dealing with majority students at PWIs:

African American instructors who teach race-focused courses are likely to present topics (e.g. racism, White privilege, and prejudice) that challenge students' self-concept and worldviews and induce discomfort, anger, and guilt. Thus, students may express their resistance to courses that focus on race-related content in multiple ways, including displaying anger and resentment, remaining silent or exhibiting mistrust and hostility toward their instructors. However, the most common way to express resistance is to assign low ratings to instructors who teach race-focused courses (p.230).

Most professors spoke of instances where students challenged their authority. In most cases, the incidents with students occurred with professors who taught courses related to race. Some students went as far as filing formal complaints against the professors. In the cases where complaints were filed, the professors were even more disturbed that department chairs and the university would give credence to the complaints considering all of the research that indicates

that Caucasian students give lower rating to professors of color. Social psychological research has documented how a rater's perception of and reaction to another person can be affected by bias, either consciously or unconsciously (Basow, Codos, & Martin, 2013; Biernat, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008.)

Jazz argued that the current political climate and racial tensions in America has caused some students to believe that they can say anything. Jazz further argued that consideration must be taken when using student evaluations in the tenure and promotion process for professors of color and women, especially for professors who teach courses that deal with sensitive issues. Jazz expressed her discontent for the unfair disadvantage placed on professors who teach race related courses. She has personally experienced students from different backgrounds raising their voices or using authoritative tones of voice with her. Although she has quickly addressed the disrespect, it may be reflected later in her evaluation. Jazz noted:

So then if I get bad evaluations, that means I'm not a good teacher? But this one who doesn't have to deal with this gets good evaluations, not accused of trying to indoctrinate people or trying to push a political agenda. 'I took this class to learn about American history, not minority history', as if somehow that's not American history. That kind of thing. So how do we compensate for those people who have to deal with that when they go out for tenure and they have these crazy scores on their teaching? It's not because they're not effective teachers, because they're getting push back from these students who are comfortable in their privilege, they don't want to hear nothing about what we have to say or they want a particular slant on how it's being taught.

Jazz expressed that as a result of this, less emphasis should be placed on student ratings and committees should be sure they are not making decisions based upon race when making promotion and tenure decisions.

Marie Woods discussed a particular instance that she encountered with a student at her university. She indicated that in most cases, when she is confronted with these issues, it is a student that is challenging her knowledge of her subject matter. Maria specifically spoke of a

situation in which a student felt he was more knowledgeable of the subject matter than she was. Marie W. was teaching a black music course in which the students were given a field project to interview bluesmen. This particular student, who was from England, had an arrogance about himself and felt that if it were not for England then bluesman would not be where they are currently. This student brought his arrogance to the project and was denied interviews as a result.

I said it's because the attitude you went in with. I said you thought that the bluesmen owed you something and he played the guitar so he wanted to gig with them and they'd shun him and stuff, so he learned the lesson the hard way.

After Woods educated him on what she knew to be true about bluesmen, the student humbled himself and was finally granted an interview. This lesson still however did not stop the arrogance in the classroom.

He used to challenge me all the time in class about black music because he thought he knew so much about black music.

Although not a regular occurrence, Woods expressed how even having this occur on a periodic basis can still be disruptive and disrespectful to the instructor and other students.

Maria is one participant that had an incident which resulted in a formal complaint. Maria was teaching a course that dealt with race and the student disagreed with what was being taught. In addition, he challenged his grades. In some instances, students can be threatening in their approach to professors. In this particular instance, Maria's discomfort was not validated by her department chair and she was further challenged. Maria spoke very passionately of an issue with blatant disrespect she received from a student in an introductory communication course. In this course she covers different types of communication including interracial communication. Maria used just one class period in which explains the types of racism, provides a definition and shows a video clip.

One of the ways I defined it (racism) is pretty common, which is societal power, plus privilege equals racism. In other words, in the US, for example, people of color cannot be racist. That's the definition that I give to my students.

After providing the definitions and discussing other concepts related to the topic, she showed a clip of the *The Color of Fear*. During the entire video clip, this particular student did not appear attentive to the movie which was evident by a continuous glaze that was locked on Maria. After the clip, a class discussion began regarding the movie.

He leads off with saying that he questioned my data, questioned everything that I just showed and didn't agree with it. Another student raises his hand and agrees with him.

After explaining to the class that the information provided would be included in their assessment, Maria continued on with the class. This particular student continued to challenge her for the rest of the semester which also included challenging his grade.

He made a C- on a reflection paper, which was supposed to be in first person. This is how I communicate. He's reflecting on his communications style. Instead, he uses third person.

As a result of this grade, the student requested a meeting to challenge the grade, Maria's grading rubric and knowledge base. The student was commanding in size and stood at least a foot taller than her. Since the student's communication with Maria had been aggressive up to this point, Maria did not feel comfortable meeting alone with the student and brought her concern to her chair's attention. She divulged:

I go to her and I tell her that I'm concerned about meeting with this student because he's very intimidating physically, he's huge, and I don't know what he might try to do, and I did not think that I was overreacting or anything like that. Instead of expressing concern and support, she questions why I feel the way that I feel. She makes it racial and says, she makes a comment about, 'Well, if he were a black guy, would you feel that way?'

Although highly offended by the line of questioning, Maria requested that the chair be within earshot of the meeting in case something transpired. During the meeting, the student responded

as Maria expected and challenged everything that she said. However, the grade on that assignment remained. The semester ends with the student earning a B. Maria leaves to teach a study abroad and upon her return, she has an email from the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO) concerning a formal complaint.

The student was accusing me of being racist. I was like, 'Well, if he had read the notes that I gave him for class that day, he would know that his claim is wrong because I cannot be racist. I can have racial prejudice, but I cannot be racist.' But that's neither here nor there.

Maria had to defend herself against this complaint which was eventually dismissed however, no apology was ever given.

They dismissed it, and it just really frustrated me that a student would ... students have rights to appeal, but because you have some other issues going on with you in terms of being a racist, you decided that you're going to come after me in class.

Ayanna had a similar experience to Maria's. Often when Black female professors are faced with these issues, they have to take valuable time to defend themselves which causes an added stress to their already stressful job. In addition, Ayanna noted that in many cases at highest/higher research activity institutions, a majority of the Caucasian students came from white high schools or they were home schooled therefore never having interacted with people of color in power positions until the enter college.

White students don't even expect to see an African American in a position of authority, they resent it.

In similar fashion to that of Maria, Ayanna had a formal complaint filed against her at the EOO office for racism. This student was enrolled in a multi-ethnic literature course. The course began with a 13th century African epic. The student questioned why they were covering this topic in class. Unfortunately, he did not like Ayanna's explanation and took his complaint to the department chair who supported Ayanna. Since the student did not like the response that he was

looking for, he escalated his complaint directly to the President's office, circumventing the chain of command which should have included the dean and the provost. Since the complaint went to the President's office, it was referred to the EOO.

These were some of his allegations: Dr. Ayanna hates all white people, Dr. Ayanna uses her position as an assistant professor to defile all white people...just idiotic, ridiculous, white supremacist kind of mess. That is the kind of duress under which African American...none of my white colleagues would ever experience anything like that in other words.

It took her an entire semester to fight the complaint thus wasting time that could have been used more productively towards promotion and tenure. That of course was one extreme case but definitely not the only one of its kind. During another term, a different student was displeased by a lecture the class was required to attend. The lecture was given by a renowned African American cultural theorist. The student, whose parents were contributors to the university, threatened to have her parents stop donating if something was not done about Dr. Ayanna. This is yet another example of how white privilege is used to disrespect Black female professors.

You know, it never ends. Again, a white faculty member would never experience this kind of harassment.

Kim Jones did not note any specific incidents with students but like Ayanna, she noted that many of her students had not interacted with a Black instructor until entering her master's or doctoral level class. In some instances, it required the students to let go of some of their pre-conceived notions in order to facilitate a more comfortable working relationship.

I believe that students do hesitate to interact with me because I am a minority professor. Kim Jones has had students that have admitted to not previously interacting with certain minority groups. However, as a result of the size of the department, they do not have the option to avoid certain professors.

I haven't had anybody to say that I'm not working with you because I'm a minority, but I've had students to make comments in regard to that ...

In some instances, students may avoid faculty of color when possible however, in small programs it is hard to avoid professors which may result in conflict for some students.

### **Summary**

Students may express their resistance to race-related course content in multiple ways, including displaying anger and resentment, remaining silent, or exhibiting mistrust and hostility toward their instructors (Jackson, 1999). The participants in the study have encountered these uncomfortable situations with their students. They noted that specifically in the case of students, colleagues must consider the research that indicates the bias that exists in student evaluations of African American female professors. During the tenure and promotion process, special consideration must be given to professors who teach courses dealing with race.

### **Recommendations of Participants**

In the study, each participant offered their advice to future Black female faculty on navigating the tenure and promotion process. These recommendations answer research question two: what recommendations would they offer to other Black female professors at PWIs pursuing a career in academia. The following recommendations directly tie to the research findings.

#### **A.T. Simpson**

##### **Recommendation 1: Be careful**

I think it goes across the board, whether they're at a Liberal Arts college, whether they're at a PWI, whether they're at an HBCU, I'd just say be careful (in general).

##### **Recommendation 2: Mentorship**

If you can find a mentor, find them.

## **Ayanna**

### **Recommendation 1: Mentors**

If you have not been assigned a mentor to seek one.

### **Recommendation 2: Tenure and Promotion requirements**

If the criteria for promotions and a tenure are published whether through the department or through the provost office, download them and read them. Then with that person's understanding of those guidelines, compare your understanding of them with your department chair to make sure that you're on the same page. That is not only from the guidelines from the department level but all the way through the tenure and promotion process. In other words, try to establish that kind of relationship with your department chair.

### **Recommendation 3: Support Systems**

Align yourself with other black professionals to the extent that you see them on campus. If they are in your department, try to do so. If not, then try to find those across the discipline to sort of be a support system through the process.

### **Recommendation 4: Conferences**

Present at professional conferences and be a member of mainstream as well as African American organizations. Serve on panels, interdisciplinary panels, as well as panels within your discipline. The things that you do grow tentacles. One opportunity leads to another. That's one of the reasons that presenting at professional conferences is important and particularly for African Americans.

### **Recommendation 5: Mentoring students**

Be of the kind of service to black students that you want Black mentors to be to you. It means many more hours that you won't be paid for but I feel that we as African American professionals,



academicians have to do this if we want our role in the university to continue. We can't just go in a corner and only work on our scholarship, on our presentations and not help to meet the needs.

## **Jazz**

### **Recommendation 1: Mentorship**

Find a mentor outside and a confidante outside the university and I would say find one inside as well. Someone that you can trust. I think part of it is that mentorship of that person who has the outside perspective is so real. I would say that's the most important is the outside one. It should be someone who knows you and can keep you grounded.

### **Recommendation 2: Form Writing Partnerships**

The other thing I would say is form partnerships. And when I say that, like writing partnerships, research partnerships, research clutches. Y'all may not be working on the same thing, but sometimes when you can get together with people who are also going through the same thing, there's a sense of co-fraternity like we're just going through, or whatever, whatever term you want to use. We're going through the same things and just try to uphold one another. I know we had a writing clutch of faculty of color for a little bit and then it kind of disbanded but when it was working, it was working. I know in other universities they go on writing retreats with other people. They out there and no TVs or limited TV use. You rent some spot at some cabin out in God knows where or you go to the Caribbean somewhere and just write. Get away and do your work. If you can do it by yourself, but if you could do it with other people, that's great. I think that's the main thing.

### **Recommendation 3: Demand Specific Feedback**

The adjectives were great, but you didn't say anything like how do you improve this? So it was only one category where I didn't get outstanding and I understood why, but you didn't say how I

am supposed to improve this. So then when I go up for full and then these fools tell me I can't be full, it's on you. Because you didn't tell me as my chair what I'm supposed to be doing.

I need you to be specific. You just give me some letter. I need to understand ... this is what you need to say: "If you want to go from very good to outstanding, and superior's in there, this is what you need to do." You don't tell me that and that's what happened to people who got denied full. You look at their letters, it don't tell you shit. So you running up there like, "Oh, yeah, I got this." I need you to tell me, "You need to be on more international committees or national committees. You need to do service and this ..." These things need to be in people's letters. And I'm telling you that half of the time, that is not in the letters and that's why people get denied because the letters aren't telling you what you're supposed to do. African-American women in the academy, if that's what you want to do, you need to ask for specific ... It don't need to be in a letter. It just needs to be some place where you can have it written as proof that this is what you were told. Because if I'm denied, I'm going to pull out my letter and be like, "This is what I got from my chair. It says nothing. All that stuff you're telling me, it's not in there." It's not fair to not tell people what the expectations are.

#### **Recommendation 4: Talk to your Dean**

I would go talk to the Dean. Because let me tell you something. The Dean's Office has overturned departments' decisions. So you need to talk to one of the Deans or whoever's in charge of whatever P&T thing and say, 'I need to talk to you. I'm thinking about this. I know what the expectation is from my department. I need you to tell me what y'all are looking for at the college level.' Because usually if it passes the college, the Vice Chancellor or the Provost, whoever these people are, they could care less. Because you don't want to go through it and it's all gravy and then it goes up to the Dean's Office of the college and they're like, "Oh, no. You

didn't do X, Y, and Z." Have that conversation. Have that conversation before you are reappointed and then after you are when you're coming close to thinking, 'I'm about to go up for full,' have that ... I did that. Last semester. I went and met with the Dean over research and was like ... I took notes.

### **Recommendation 5: Document Everything**

You know who told me that? It was another colleague who left their university to come to ours. Her old university to come to this one. Document everything. She had a grievance, she won her grievance. Why? Because she had it all documented to show the bias that's going on in her department, and won it. When you have meetings, if you can just follow up and be like, "Thank you so much for taking time to meet with me and discuss, whatever.' But you should definitely make sure that you document everything. I think part of the problem is that a lot of people are scared to have that conversation.

### **Recommendation 6: Know your foe**

I would say this. That it helps when you know who your enemies are and you know who your friends are. Know your foes and know your friends. Your job is not to make them like you. That's not ... Hell no. Your job is to make sure that you understand how the foe is thinking and try to cut that off at the pass with your work.

### **Recommendation 7: Find an Advocate**

Find someone who can advocate for you who is going to be in that meeting. We can't be in our own meeting. So you need that person who's going to go into that meeting and be like, 'Oh, no. That's not what happened.' You got to have an advocate and you got to be discreet about who that person is. You got to be discerning because some people, they petty. Don't have time for that. You have to figure out and one thing I have to say is that two of my people, friends, who

didn't get tenure didn't have that person in the room or that person in the room was too junior to make any impact on that conversation. So for me, you have to have that person or persons who you know can advocate for you. So for instance, if you know ... So like the situation I told you about teaching where I had those two sets of bad evaluations and they were saying all kinds of crazy stuff like, 'Oh, I wanted to take American History not US minority'... whatever the hell. I had people who were advocates for me who were voting on my file... who could be like, 'Oh, no,' you need to write in the letter why we are not putting any weight on that. The thing is, there's someone who came up after me who went through a similar thing and it was a white woman. I was an advocate in that meeting saying, 'Oh, no. Did you read the comments? Forget the number. Read the comments.'

### **Kim Jones**

#### **Recommendation 1: Mentorship**

I know one thing for me is to find your mentor early. If it's on campus, if it's close to your department or your college...for you to find a mentor as close to your line of study as you can. If that's not available for you then I would encourage them to find a mentor outside of the university. If they could have both that would be great. It doesn't always have to be another African American female but that would probably help them to understand some of the challenges that they may face. I think having somebody to mentor them initially would be important.

#### **Recommendation 2: Know your Department Chair**

I would also ask them if they're taking a position is to really get to know their department chair to make sure they're going to be supportive of them. If they do face some of these barriers that

that's going to be a person that's going to actually advocate for them or to make sure that if something does happen that they could kind of minimize some of those challenges.

### **Recommendation 3: Networking**

I would also encourage them to think beyond, not just in the department but also in their field, when they do other colleges, network... social network connections... social networking is very important and don't lose sight of that because if they do get some resistance where they are, you know you can always get something positive or feel like you're moving. I think that was a challenge for me because I was so in the zone of working every day and trying to get my research agenda that ... when I was receiving some of the negative feedback...it can be kind of devastating, then when I would go to something nationally and they'd be like oh these are awesome ideas and I'm thinking well I got shut down, shot down. You know where I am but they're telling me it's something great. I think if I was just kind of kept a balance of that throughout the process I probably would have been a little bit more productive or at least felt like I was, or felt like I wasn't always defeated by... okay, this is a horrible idea...especially because I feel you don't have ... you don't know if people truly think this is a horrible idea or they have other motives and they just don't believe that you're capable of doing something because they have certain stereotypes about African American females.

### **Recommendation 3: Do not work in Isolation**

Don't get into the realm of working in isolation...you know avoid at all costs. You know you do set your agenda. My agenda, my agenda and I'm in control and actually you need support to get those big projects. You need people. Do not get into the solo solitude of it's my class, it's my research, and it's my service.

## **Maria**

### **Recommendation 1: Pursue Research that Interests You**

I'd encourage them to pursue research that is of interest to them, so it doesn't really matter if somebody ... I encourage them to pursue research that they have a passion for that they feel like it's their calling, so you run after that. I don't think I've ever run into anybody who felt like just because they're doing, or just because they're a woman of color, that they have to do race work. I tell them to continue doing whatever it is they feel that they've been called to do, even if it feels like it is difficult, or whatever. If you feel that pull towards that kind of research, then that means that that's what is a part of your academic or your professional destiny. Follow that.

### **Recommendation 2: Seek Support**

I would also encourage them to really seek out support from other people, especially black women, if things get too hard.

## **Marie Woods**

### **Recommendation 1: Guard Your Time**

Guard your time, put yourself on a timeframe and hold to it as much as possible. Get a schedule for getting out certain publications, and just don't let other folks determine your time and I did that initially. You have to find for yourself a happy medium and don't let them overuse you or take advantage of you. Because you are assistant professor and you are nice and you'll go do this and do because you think this is important and it is important but you are just not the one that has to do it all the time. Be assertive when it comes to your time because they will suck every bit of it up so you just have to know when ... just assess when it is important for you to stop working and the other thing is to have a regular time to write, just have a regular time to write. If you don't ... Just sit down and start writing or either think about writing. If you can't write today just

think about what you need to write. It's best to have that regular time and when you're not in that time, when you're not there then your body is going to feel like there's something wrong. Take Sunday off or whatever but if you do this for five to six days a week at least five, and you get yourself in a habit of being at your desk or being in your carrel. If you can't write just go there and read. If you can't write go there and think about writing but it's something about being in that spot and if you are not there your body is going to say, 'We're out of sync. We're supposed to be writing, we're supposed to be reading or we're supposed to be thinking'. It's very important to have that time, so many days a week and stick with it as close as possible.

### **Recommendation 2: Take the time to think**

One of the best of pieces advice someone has given me is to go out and think. We are so busy doing stuff all the time. Either writing or reading, doing stuff with our students. Take the time to think and that's how you develop your critical thinking skills. You read this but just because it's there in black and white and it's printed, doesn't mean that I have to go by everything you say, why can't I question that? These are just some of the things that I would tell up and coming professors to do as far as their time management and writing, reading and thinking.

### **Recommendation 3: Be Organized**

Being organized. Because when you are organized, you have your time schedule, you won't let people mess it up too much. You go, 'No I'm supposed to be doing this at this time no I'm supposed to be in my carrel these two hours.' You'll start guarding it more when you can see yourself and you'll see the progress you are making, yes. Then even with your students, mentoring students and working with students, you have to draw the line.

## **Umoja**

### **Recommendation 1: Mentorship**

I would recommend to them that they find a mentor that looks like them, that has had similar experiences to them, and whose scholarship is similar to theirs. I would suggest that they do that so that they can have an example of what their life might look like through the lens of that individual. Not to duplicate that individual's experience, but at least to have some point of comparison so that they can either be empowered or they can be warned or they can be deterred. So I guess it's a whole matter of finding someone that fits those criteria so that they can have choices in academe as they pursue tenure and promotion so that they can make sure, this is something that they really want to do and learn that there's a lot involved in what they really want to do and it has to be intentional and purposeful and it won't happen by luck. It happens by design.

### **Summary**

While this research provided a platform for the voices of seven Black female professors in this study to be heard, the issue of having small numbers of Black female professors at public predominantly white institutions will not be eliminated with my study. There continues to be a need for more research in the area of Black female professors and their pursuit of tenure at public PWIs.

The recommendations of the seven participants can be used by current assistant professors and those considering academia to help eradicate some issues associated with obtaining tenure. For Black female professors, these recommendations are important to make them aware of what they may be facing before they enter academia. As current assistant professors or for those considering academia, the advice from the seven participants can serve as



strategies for moving through the tenure and promotion process with less contentiousness as their predecessors. Jazz made an important statement about many Black female professors coming from backgrounds where they may be the only person in their family to obtain a terminal degree. When they enter the academy, they do not have a point of reference to obtain the knowledge for success. When a person is not familiar with a situation, asking questions sometimes prove futile because you don't know what questions to ask. Using the recommendations of the participants gives BFPs a starting point of what to look for, how to prepare for tenure from the onset and how to navigate through the system. In addition, they will be aware of being pulled in too many directions and will set limits on their service based on race and gender. Furthermore, the recommendations make BFPs aware of the need to diversify their research and collaboration with their majority peers when possible.

The implications of the findings are to change policies within the universities to develop programs and systems of support of Black female professors and other faculty of color at public PWIs. By addressing this concern and focusing on the development and successful tenure and promotion of BFPs, the number of POC within a department would naturally increase. One area of concern is biased student evaluations. Since there is an awareness that student evaluations are biased towards persons of color and women, universities need to place less stock in the evaluations of students or produce a more equitable process of receiving feedback from students. One example may be to take student evaluations during mid-term instead of the end of the semester when feelings may be heightened by grades.

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to uncover the experiences of Black female professors at select public highest/higher research activity PWIs as they pursued tenure and the factors that

influenced their success. After analyzing the data, the experiences ranged from being denied tenure the first time to achieving tenure with a unanimous vote. One of the primary concerns of the participants was the lack of consistency in the tenure and promotion requirements within their institutions because this allowed for too much subjectivity in the judging of their dossiers. Lack of respect for their research was the secondary issue that the professors discussed. Most participants agreed, especially those who did race work, that their work was not valued or understood. Often their work was discredited or seen as less than that of their colleagues. In addition, the participants divulged that a lack of respect by colleagues and students was another experience that they encountered that was often unique to them based upon race and gender. All of the participants agreed that student evaluations were biased against them.

Most of the women in the study agreed that mentorship was an essential component of the tenure and promotion process whether they received mentorship or not. The professors all agree that Black females in the academy need someone that is supporting them and guiding them. One participant did not feel that mentorship is beneficial especially in situations where a person already has their mind made up about you. In one particular instance, a mentor never engaged the mentee the entire time that they worked together therefore, she had to seek out her own mentors. Because of the lack of proper mentorship, some women had a more difficult time in the academy. Because of improper mentorship or lack of mentorship, some participants discussed experiences where colleagues did not obtain tenure because of being advised improperly. Although a lot of the participants did not have formal mentors, they sought mentors outside of their departments or institutions because they knew the extreme value in having them. As a result, all of the participants have served and continue to serve as mentors for other Black females in the academy.

The women in the study received external supports from mentors while pursuing tenure. In addition the institutional mentors, professors spoke of how important making professional connections outside of their institutions was to their success. Attending conferences was noted as a source of meeting colleagues. Participants received advice on presenting at conferences, applying for fellowships, turning presentations into articles and even meeting writing partners by attending professional conferences and meeting colleagues. In addition, the participants discussed the importance of the support they received from family and friends as essential. They noted that even though they may not have understood the process that it was always good just having someone to vent to. In addition to mentors, family, and friends, some participants expressed the importance of their faith during the process. It was during their most difficult times that they believed that their prayers and faith in God brought them through the most difficult situations on their campuses.

The women in this study spoke of other colleagues who had left the academy before receiving tenure or shortly after. The difference for these women is that quitting was never an option for them. Even though many of them were the first or only Black female professors in their departments, they all felt the necessity to persist. In many cases, they spoke of the importance of being there for students of color and supporting their endeavors or organizations. They realized that just like they needed to feel support, their students needed it too.

The women in this study gave valuable advice to Black females in the academy and those considering joining the academy. The participants thought it was necessary for other professors to be aware of what is expected of them when they enter academia and how they would be evaluated. The greatest piece of advice was to seek out mentors especially if one was not provided. Many said that the gender and race of the mentors were not important however, having

Black female mentors that understood the struggle were important to have in addition to other mentors. The participants noted the importance of being a mentor to others. In general, the ladies expressed the importance of not working in isolation and devising a support system. This study showed that despite all of issues that were stacked against them, the participants were able to persist in their academic institutions. All of the women became tenured professors and they all believe in the importance of helping others to achieve that goal as well.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to explore the tenure and promotion experiences of African American female professors at select predominantly white institutions. Seven Black female professors were interviewed in this narrative research study. The participants were all associate or full professors at a PWI. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the experiences of Black female professors at select public PWIs as they pursued tenure?
2. What recommendations would they offer to other Black female professors at public PWIs pursuing a career in academia?
3. What role has mentorship played in their experiences in academia?

#### **Summary of the Findings**

The purpose of this narrative study was to delve into the tenure experiences of African American female professors at select public predominantly white institutions. This study was designed to determine if Black female professors at select highest/higher research activity institutions had similar experiences with the tenure process. Given the difficult challenges that Black female professors have historically encountered in higher education and society, it is important to monitor the environments in which they work. Given the disproportionality and attrition of Black female professors at PWIs, efforts should be made to understand their experience and seek solutions to retaining Black female professors at PWIs. After analyzing the data, the major issues faced with the tenure and promotion process were vague and unclear requirements, lack of respect for their research and being pulled in multiple directions. The data showed that mentorship was an essential component in the tenure and promotion process and that

participants sought out mentors when they were not provided to them. In addition to mentors, participants noted the importance of advocates and support systems. Noting the need for support, the participants extended themselves as mentors to offer support whether they received it or not.

Although the tenure process is difficult, all of the women made it through and two have achieved the rank of full professor. Interestingly, the two professors who have achieved full rank both attended the university where they currently work for the bachelor's and master's degree. Obtaining tenure was less contentious for some than for others but they all experienced some sort of marginalization, stereotypes, and/or negativity when going through the process. Often, the negativity was through relationships with colleagues and interactions with students. However, these women were able to persist.

Analyzing data with a theoretical framework that contributes to Black females preserved the voices of the participants. Several external factors contributed to each individual's experience within their department for the promotion and tenure process. The overall finding was that even though the tenure and promotion process is required to progress from assistant to associate professor, many factors such as the size of the department, support and individual interpretation of committee members all factored into the process. Only one participant explicitly stated that she felt that race was a direct factor in her process. In this study I sought to highlight the 7 unique experiences of each participant giving credence to their individual experiences and not grouping them all in one category. Although they are all Black female professors, each person had their own experience.

### **Influencing Factors**

Several factors influenced the experiences of Black female professors in the tenure and promotion process at select public PWIs. In summary, they are: (1) vague and unclear tenure

requirements, (2) lack of support or mentorship, (3) biased student evaluations, (4) unsupportive colleagues (5) being the only person of color in their departments, (6) serving on too many committees where they were selected due to race and/or gender (7) discounting of research. Some participants hinted at the fact that requirements were intentionally left vague so that committees could have the opportunity to be subjective without consequence or question. Although these factors can negatively affect the tenure and promotion process, professors can be successful if they are aware of them and can navigate around the issues. However, efforts should be made to understand the types of issues that hinder success in the tenure process.

### **Future Research**

I believe that more qualitative research studies should be done in the area of studying Black female professors in academia. While I believe that the semi-structured interviews used for this study were instrumental in helping to delve into the lives of the participants, I do concur that future studies on this topic could be improved. My recommendations for future study are as follows:

1. Conduct studies with Black female professors who did not obtain tenure. This would give a better understanding to the specific reasons why tenure was not obtained.
2. Conduct studies with Black female professors who left academia. This is important research because it would open a lens to why so many Black women choose to leave the academy.
3. Conduct studies with Black female professors at Historically Black Colleges or Hispanic Serving Institutions. Conducting the study with Black females at minority serving institutions would help to shed light on whether this is a systemic issue within PWIs or a wider spread issue that crosses racial barriers.

4. Conduct studies with all minority groups of females (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American) to determine if women from minority groups have similar experiences with tenure across ethnic groups.
5. Conduct studies with Black female professors at highest/higher research activity institutions, private colleges and liberal arts colleges to determine if there are similar experiences across institution types.

In order for systematic change to occur, it will take more than the experiences of seven women at highest/higher research activity institutions. However, the hope is that this research will begin the conversation that promotes change in programs and services for Black female professors. Black feminist thought must continue to be used to analyze the educational inequalities.

### **Black Feminist Thought**

Black Feminist Thought highlights issues of being devalued, ignored, and disrespected (Collins, 2000). Collins (1990) suggests that Black women as a group experience the world differently than those who are not Black and female and that their experiences stimulate a distinctive Black feminist consciousness. Four core themes of Black Feminist Thought that were addressed are (1) Work Family, and Black Women's Oppression, (2) mummies, matriarchs, and other controlling images (3) The Power of Self-Definition, and (4) Rethinking Black Women's Activism. Living as Black women provides experiences to stimulate a Black feminist consciousness.

### **Work Family, and Black Women's Oppression**

One core theme of Black feminist thought consists of analyzing Black women's work, especially Black women's labor market victimization as "mules" (Collins, 2000, p.43). This



theme was evident in this study as the participants discussed their experiences with tenure. Many participants spoke of being pulled in multiple directions and being asked to be on multiple committees because of their race and/or ethnicity. In addition, many participants were required to have heavier course loads and or larger classes than what was required of their non-Black colleagues.

### **Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other controlling Images**

In order to exercise power, elite white men and their representatives must be in a position to manipulate appropriate symbols concerning Black women (Patterson, 1982). This theme of BFT was apparent throughout this study. One representation of the theme was vague and non-specific tenure and promotion requirements. Many participants noted that by allowing non-specific requirements allowed too much room for interpretation by committee members. When members did not have specific requirements, it welcomed subjectivity which often did not favor Black female professors. Another component of the theme was the refusal to refer to Black female professors by their appropriate title. Some professors experienced colleagues calling them by their first name in public settings however, they never referred to their white colleagues in that manner. In addition, some professors had these same experiences with students where they asked them if they could call them by their first names but they always referred to their other professors as Doctor. BFT is important in assisting Black women in effectively dealing with macro-aggressions that they may experience in the workplace (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

### **The Power of Self-Definition**

Black women's efforts to find a voice have occurred in at least three safe spaces. One location involves Black women's relationships with one another (Collins, 2000). The Power of

Self-Definition includes the sub-theme of Black Women's relationships with one another. Myers (1991) stated that as mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends to one another, African-American women affirm one another. This theme is very prevalent throughout the study. The participants spoke of their experiences with mentorship and mentors and the value that they placed on those relationships. BFT provides useful tools for rectifying the marginalization that Black female professors continue to experience in post-secondary institutions. The concept of standpoint suggests that connective strategies may work to strengthen and bond Black women. The concept describes the bonding that occurs among black women as a result of their common struggle with racism and sexism. The women in this study recognized the importance of that connectedness. They recognized it so much to the degree that they actively sought out relationships with other Black females. Some noted that they may not have made it through the tenure process without those relationships. Collins (2000) noted, in the comfort of daily conversations, through serious conversation and humor, African-American women as sisters and friends affirm one another's humanity, specialness, and right to exist. As a result, many of the research participants now mentor other faculty or feel an obligation to assist them in the tenure process. Participants noted that participating in career-long mentorship could help to eliminate some of the obstacles facing Black female faculty members who strive to be tenured (Aguirre, 2000).

### **Rethinking Black Women's Activism**

Historically, African American resistance to racial oppression could not have occurred without an accompanying struggle for group survival (Collins, 2000). The first dimension is the struggle for group survival. The struggle for group survival is related to mentorship and community. As Black women in academia, most participants felt a duty to help other Black women through the process. Community allows Black female professors to deal with adversity

that the encounter on a daily basis. Mentorship and advocacy allows BFP to be fully informed of the tenure and promotion process which will allow them to get through the maze. The second dimension of Black women's activism is the struggle for institutional reform (Collins, 2000). One component of institutional reform is to increase the number of tenured Black female professors in academia. One way that Black female professors are achieving this is through mentorship of other Black female professors. Participants in this study have tackled this area by offering advice to future faculty and telling their stories so that Black women can be fully informed of what they may encounter. Another way to promote institutional reform is to challenge the current status quo. Jazz particularly spoke of demanding specific feedback from supervisors. Ayanna spoke of her experience with deciding to not sit back and wait but to go to her dean and request a meeting. Maria spoke of challenging colleagues who are trying to demean and discredit you. All of these women took a stance to promote reform within their departments. Often, it is as simple as challenging policies that are not inclusive of everyone or directly challenging micro-aggressions. Each person took a respectful approach to challenging the issues. Documentation was also a suggestion that was offered that would be useful in promoting institutional reform.

### **Recommendations for Black Female Faculty**

Throughout the course of this study, several participants expressed frustration with working in academia. At least one participant suggested she was seriously considering leaving academia due to the mistreatment that she experienced. One issue that was brought to light was that many Black female professors are nearing the age of retirement which will cause a decrease in the already small numbers of Black female faculty at PWIs. As a student in a doctoral program, when asking Black female classmates what their future plans are, out of 15 women

only one has expressed a slight interest in entering academia. There is a feeling of anxiety and uncertainty about entering the academy. The following recommendations were derived from my understanding of the stories told by the participants. These recommendations in addition to the recommendations offered by the participants are strategies for helping Black female professors move through the tenure and promotion process successfully.

1. Develop relationships within your departments and colleges with people who are not people of color. These relationships must be developed with people who you can trust and who you believe can give you honest feedback and have your best interest at heart.
2. Pay attention to all feedback whether it is harsh or subtle feedback. Document the feedback and refer back to it when necessary.
3. Collaborate with others regardless of their race or gender. Choose individuals that have similar personality traits and who are perceived positively in your institution and in research communities.
4. If you are assigned a mentor, be cognizant of how that person is treated and perceived within your department and institution. You do not want your mentor to be a bad reflection upon you. If you have the option to choose your mentor, be very selective in how you make the choice. Choose someone who is respected and valued within your department or university.
5. Seek outside mentors. Whether you are assigned a mentor or not, seek a mentor that is outside of your institution for unbiased advice. In addition, seek a person that is senior to you and has knowledge of your field and successful experience with tenure and promotion process.

6. Be willing to be self-reflective and adjust your communication style in the workplace.

Often in the tenure process, participants spoke of being voted unfavorably upon simply due to personality conflicts.

7. Document everything. Keep all communications as related to promotion and tenure.

In addition, from the first day at the university keep a running account of all of your work as it relates to promotion and tenure. This will help in not having to search for items when it is time to compile your dossier for submission.

8. Self-care is necessary. Make sure that you are taking care of yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically. If you are not functioning at your best, it will affect your work.

9. Create positive relationships with students but still require respect. In courses that involve sensitive subjects, it may be helpful to address the nuances of the subject matter that at the beginning of the course.

10. Find ways to educate your colleagues about your research if your work is on sensitive subjects. Note that faculty members in your department ultimately may be judging your work and you want them to have an understanding in order to make informed decisions.

### **Limitations**

While completing this study, several limitations surfaced. The first limitation was participant selection. Due to the limits of the initial 13 institutions that the researcher selected, there was a limited pool of possible participants. Possible participants were contacted and some responded immediately. The researcher made email and phone contact with possible

participants. Some participants that agreed to participate completed the online survey did not follow through with the interview.

Scheduling interviews was a second limitation of the study. Many of the participants had very busy schedules which included conferences, research, and teaching. In addition, spring break created a time period when several possible participants were not available. Different time zones also factored into the limitations. Individual conversations were had with each participant to schedule a time that was mutually agreeable to both parties.

Distance was another limitation to the study. A majority of the participants lived at minimum five hours away. Those participants that lived within driving distance or who would be within driving distance were interviewed in person. Five of the seven interviews were completed either in person or via video-conferencing where body language could be fully viewed. Even though video-conferencing was useful to see the expressions of the participants, face-to-face interviewing was the best method. Video-conferencing was a good alternative to face-to-face interviewing. Member checking was another limitation. Many participants took extended periods of time to review the transcripts that were sent to them. Several emails were sent to the participants to remind them to review and respond regarding their transcriptions. Due to an extended family illness which caused one participant to be out of town caused an extreme delay in reviewing the transcript. Another limitation of the study was a lack of diversity in department representation. Participants from the STEM field were specifically solicited however, they did not show interest in participating in the study. Therefore, the participants were limited to the arts and humanities. Another limitation was access to the data needed from universities and nationally to determine the number of Black female professors on each campus and nationally. A few universities had the information readily available by race/gender and rank

but in most cases it had to be requested, waited for weeks are never received at all. This led the researcher to wonder if these numbers may have been purposely suppressed. Why was it so hard to obtain simple data? Universities may want the public to believe that they are making special efforts to recruit and retain faculty of color however, the numbers indicate that this is not the case on most campuses.

### **Implications**

The vision for this project was spurred in part by the personal experiences of the researcher as the only Black female in most educational and work experiences throughout her life. The researcher sought to understand the various experiences of Black female professors at a public highest/higher research activity PWI. Additionally, this research project desired to identify strategies to aid in lessening the effects of institutional discrimination specifically experienced by Black female professors at PWIs. If institutions of higher education intend to make commitments to system-wide diversity, it is imperative they begin to support Black female professors through the tenure and promotion process not just by hiring them. The targeted sample for this study revealed just how meager the representation of Black Female Professors are at public highest/higher research activity institutions. Given the extremely small number of potential participants who fit the sample demographic, university names received pseudonyms in addition to the participants as to protect the anonymity of the participants who would otherwise be almost immediately recognizable. Future studies with this targeted sample may seek to include institutions outside of the chosen sample group. This research offers significant insight into the experiences of Black female professors at public PWIs who are often isolated from other minorities in their departments, colleges, and activities. The research provided a review of their strategies for persistence and the enhancement of their experiences.

## **Conclusion**

The study explored the tenure experiences of seven Black female professors at select public highest/higher research activity predominantly white institutions in the United States. Each of these professors were successfully appointed to associate professor and two have achieved the rank of full professor. Their narratives expressed the struggles as well as the successes that they experienced at their universities. Since the numbers of tenured Black female professors at highest/higher research activity institutions are still few, their individual achievements are remarkable.

The research focusing on the experiences of Black female professors at public PWIs is still limited. Most of the information available focuses on the statistical data. However, the stories of these seven women provides an in-depth view into some factors that attributed to these women continuing in academia. The journey was easier for some participants than for others but they all were able to achieve their goal of obtaining rank. The five associate professors continue to work diligently toward the rank of full professor. All of these women showed diligence and persistence in the face of adversity.

This study adds to the literature on the underrepresentation of Black female professors at public highest/higher research activity PWIs. This study is consistent with previous studies that indicate that the problem still exists today. However, previous studies highlighted the problem but did not offer concrete solutions that would help solve the problem for Black women who are already in the pipeline. This study specifically sought the advice of Black female professors to other Black female professors which adds to the literature by offering solutions and valuable insight. The retention of Black female professors must be addressed by administrators. In order for this problem to be rectified, a serious look must be taken into the consistency of requirements



for tenure across departments, colleges, and the universities. In addition, administrators need to seriously consider a mentorship program for individual junior faculty or a university wide training program on the tenure and promotion process that will help Black female professors from the beginning until the end.

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## APPENDIX A

### REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Dear Prospective Participants

My name is Veta E. Parker and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership, Research and Counseling at Louisiana State University. I am currently conducting research on the tenure experiences of Black (African American) Female Faculty at public Highest and Higher Research Institutions as part of my completion of the doctoral degree in higher education administration.

This is a qualitative study using primarily interviews to explore the challenges that Black (African American) Female Faculty experience as professionals at public Highest and Higher Research Institutions and the strategies they employed to successfully obtain tenure. I am hoping to bring light to the need for more faculty of color at PWIs and an awareness of what it takes to be successful. If you agree to participate I am asking for a commitment of one interview scheduled at your convenience **between March 13-April 5, 2017**.

Your response to this request is important to the advancement of my research on Black (African American) Female Faculty at PWIs. Your participation is greatly needed, valued and would be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating please respond via email by **March 16, 2017** to [vetaparker@gmail.com](mailto:vetaparker@gmail.com). If you agree to the study, please complete the pre-interview survey prior to our interview [https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_d6j2SOLmEnL9sIT](https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d6j2SOLmEnL9sIT). At that time, you will create a pseudonym to be used throughout this process to protect your identity. In addition, I have enclosed the consent form for your review and signature if you agree to participate.

Shortly after receiving your completed online survey, I will call or email you to set up interview dates and times. If you have questions or need additional information please feel free to contact me at (985)-381-1323 or [vetaparker@gmail.com](mailto:vetaparker@gmail.com). Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Veta E. Parker

## APPENDIX B

### CONSENT FORM FOR NON-CLINICAL STUDY

**Research Study Title:** How I got over: A study of the tenure experiences of Black female professors at public predominantly white institutions

**Performance Sites:** Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College and via personal interviews

**Investigators:** The following investigators are available for questions about this study.

- Veta Parker, M.Ed., LSU Doctoral Student, ELRC, 985-381-1323, [vparke3@lsu.edu](mailto:vparke3@lsu.edu)
- Roland Mitchell, Ph.D., LSU Professor, 225-578-2918, 2156, [rwmitch@lsu.edu](mailto:rwmitch@lsu.edu)

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to explore the tenure experiences Black female faculty at public predominantly white institutions.

**Subject Inclusion:** Individuals who self-identify as Black and female and who obtained tenure at a public PWI. Pregnant women may be included in this study and the risk to the fetus is minimal. Both mother and father must sign the consent form unless the father's identity cannot be ascertained, he is not reasonably available, and/or the pregnancy is from rape.

**Number of subjects:** 4-8

**Study Procedures:** Potential study participants will be recruited via e-mail or face-to-face and provided with information regarding the topic as well as provided with the informed consent form for review. Individuals agreeing to participate in the study will sign, scan, and e-mail the consent form to [vetaparker@gmail.com](mailto:vetaparker@gmail.com). The study will be conducted in one phase. Participants will schedule an interview with the study's principal researcher and complete a 60 minute interview that will be audio-recorded. The audio file will be transcribed by the study's researchers or a hired transcriptionist. Any hired transcriptionists will not know the identity of study participants, only the provided/issued pseudonym. The researchers will code the transcriptions and analyze the survey data.

**Benefits:** Subjects will add to literature on the experiences of tenured Black female faculty at public predominantly white institutions.

**Risks:** There are no known physical, psychological or physiological risks associated with participating in this research. However, as it with all studies minimal risks can present themselves and primarily include the possibility of discomfort in recalling past or current experiences/events that pertain to questions about life as an academic. However, you may elect to not answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or uneasy. You can still remain a study participant and simply choose to not answer certain questions. All answers will remain confidential.

**Right to Refuse:** Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

**Privacy:** Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless law- requires disclosure.

**Signatures:**

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University, (225) 578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX C**

### **PRE-INTERVIEW ONLINE SURVEY**

1. Please select one or more descriptions corresponding to the group(s) which you identify.
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American (U.S. born)
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - I elect not to identify
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - White (U.S. born)
  - Please identify your pseudonym (which will be used during the interview).
2. Please identify your current institution.
3. Please identify your title.
  - Associate Professor
  - Professor
  - Distinguished or Endowed Professor
  - Professor Emeritus
  - Other
  - Please identify any additional titles or roles (i.e. fellowship(s), chair(s), administrative titles, etc.)
4. What is your terminal degree?
  - Ed.D.
  - D.B.A.
  - D.F.A.
  - J.D.
  - M.D.
  - Ph.D.
  - Psy.D.
  - Other
5. What is your terminal degree's field of study?
6. What is the field or program title and type in which you are currently employed?
7. Where did you earn your terminal degree?
8. What year did you earn your terminal degree?



9. What is your current age?

10. At what age did you earn tenure?

11. What is your current salary range?

- \$40,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$69,999
- \$70,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000-\$99,999
- over \$100,000

12. What would you describe your campus culture as?

- Advocacy
- Bureaucratic
- Collegial
- Developmental
- Managerial
- Political
- Tangible
- Virtual
- Other

13. Did you work at previous institutions prior to your current institution?

- yes
- no

14. Are there any Black female faculty colleagues that you can recommend to me who are employed at a public Nationally Competitive Research University? If so, please include their name, university, and any contact information.

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study! As mentioned via e-mail, the interview provides the opportunity to obtain insight on the tenure experiences of African American female faculty at predominantly white institutions.

If, at any point, you wish to not answer a question, simply say, “I prefer not to answer.” If you wish to not participate or wish to conclude the interview at any point and want to be removed from the study, simply let me know and all documentation will be destroyed and any dialogue you have provided thus far, will be erased and will not be used in the study.

Do you have any questions? Let’s begin.

*[Turn on digital audio recorder. Ask the following questions in semi-structured format; allowing for follow-up questions as needed.]*

15. Please state your desired pseudonym and current job title.
16. What was the tenure process at your university when you underwent it?
  - a. Is it uniform across academic departments, schools, and colleges?
  - b. How did your institution identify tenure and promotion committee members at that time?
17. Please tell about your experiences with the process.
  - a. How many levels, who reviewed, and what was the minimal number of votes or approvals required?
18. Were the requirements or minimal standards for tenure and promotion provided to you?
  - a. If so, when?
  - b. If not, why?
19. Is the tenure and promotion process the same now as it was when you completed it?
  - a. If not, how is it different?
  - b. Do you perceive it to be more or less challenging now?
20. Did you receive a unanimous vote for tenure (meaning each level voted in support of you earning tenure)?
21. What has been your experiences with:
  - a. Scholarship/Research
  - b. Teaching
  - c. Service
22. Do you feel the tenure process was fair?
23. Do you feel the tenure process was unbiased?
24. Do you feel (or know based on conversation with other tenured Black female faculty at PWIs in your field in other states) your experiences during the tenure process at a PWI were compatible with your discipline’s overall process?
  - a. If so, how were they compatible?
  - b. If not, how do you feel your geographic context affected
25. How would you describe the role of politics in your tenure process?

26. Tell me about your interactions with other faculty members on your campus. Did you receive support from them during and/or throughout the tenure process?
  27. Did you publish with people in your department?
  28. What issues, if any, have you been confronted as a Black female professor seeking tenure or post tenure?
  29. What role did mentorship play in your pursuit of tenure, if any?
  30. From what sources of support did you identify upon entering academia and throughout the tenure process?
  31. Would you say you have served as a mentor? If so, to who? Why?
- Do you feel mentorship is a critical element during the tenure process?
- a. If so, why?
  - b. If not, why?
32. What advice would you offer to other Black females pursuing tenure at a PWI, particularly a higher/highest research activity institution?
  33. Is there anything else you would like to add about your tenure process experience, that we have not covered?

Thank you again for participating in the study! I truly hope this was a good experience for you, please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have or if you think of anything additional you wish to share.

*[Turn off digital audio recorder.]*

## APPENDIX E

### IRB APPROVAL



#### ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

**TO:** Veta Parker  
Education

**FROM:** Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** February 17, 2017

**RE:** IRB# E10337

**TITLE:** How I got over: A study of the tenure experiences of tenured Black female professors at predominantly white institutions

Institutional Review  
Board Dr. Dennis Landin,  
Chair 130 David Boyd  
Hall Baton Rouge, LA  
70803 P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu) | [lsu.edu/irb](http://lsu.edu/irb)

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review Date:** 2/15/2017

**Approved**     X     **Disapproved**           

**Approval Date:** 2/17/2017 **Approval Expiration Date:** 2/16/2020

**Exemption Category/Paragraph:** 2b

**Signed Consent Waived?:** No

**Re-review frequency:** (three years unless otherwise stated)

**LSU Proposal Number** (if applicable):

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:** (if applicable)

**By:** Dennis Landin, Chairman 

#### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING – Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

\* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>

## VITA

Veta E. Parker is a native of Assumption Parish in Louisiana where she graduated from E.D. White Catholic High School in Thibodaux. She holds an Education Specialist certification from Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College (LSU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where she is pursuing her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Research with a concentration in Higher Education Administration. She earned a Master of Education degree in Counselor Education from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA and a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education (social studies) from Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College at Baton Rouge. Veta has 20 years of experience in K-12 education where she worked as a teacher and a professional school counselor. Veta has great interest in helping underrepresented students to gain access to higher education and explore career options. She is an advocate and supporter of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and her research centers around educating Black students and helping them to successfully complete their degrees. Veta is interested in improving admissions policies to be more inclusive of all applicants. Veta's goal is to work with students beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to help them properly prepare for the college application process.